00110969

God
251
Sim/Hor
110969

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 21 October, 2015

CONTENTS.

VOL. IX.

Skeleton		Page
902.	*Paul's Love to the Church at Rome*	1
903.	*No Man to be ashamed of the Gospel*	5
904.	*The Lost State of the Gentile World*	11
905.	*Those who judge others, judged*	18
906.	*The Rule of God's future Judgment*	24
907.	*Inconsistent Christians remonstrated with*	31
908.	*Christians' Advantages above Heathens*	37
909.	*Justification by Faith alone*	41
910.	*Justification by Faith necessary to the Honour of God, and the Happiness of Man*	49
911.	*Benefits arising from a Justifying Faith*	55
912.	*The Believer's Security in Christ*	60
913.	*Happiness of the more-advanced Believer*	65
914.	*Death by Adam, and Life by Christ*	70
915.	*The Christian risen with Christ in Newness of Life,*	76
916.	*Unprofitableness and Folly of Sin*	80
917.	*Man's Desert, and God's Mercy*	84
918.	*Deadness to the Law, and Union with Christ*	88
919.	*The Spirituality of the Law*	91
920.	*Spiritual Conflicts of Believers*	94

Skeleton		Page
976.	*Death a conquered Enemy*	467
977.	*The Trials and Consolations of Ministers useful to their People*	472
978.	*The Testimony of a good Conscience*	479
979.	*The Churchman's Confession, or an Appeal to the Liturgy*	485
980.	*The different Operations of the Holy Spirit* . .	500
981.	*The Devices of Satan exposed*	504
982.	*The Importance of the Ministry*	511
983.	*Christians are Epistles of Christ*	515
984.	*The Glory of the Gospel above that of the Law* .	520
985.	*The future Conversion of the Jews*	527
986.	*The Contest between God and Satan*	535
987.	*The Trials of Christians the Means of magnifying their Lord*	540
988.	*The Christian's assured Prospect of Glory* . . .	546
989.	*The Christian walking by Faith*	552
990.	*The constraining Power of Christ's Love* . . .	557
991.	*The Way of Reconciliation with God*	561
992.	*The Grace of God not to be received in vain* . .	566
993.	*Separation from the World enjoined*	570
994.	*Sanctification wrought by the Promises*	577
995.	*The Grounds of a Minister's Regard to his People,*	584
996.	*Liberality to the Poor*	586
997.	*The Benefit arising from Attention to the Poor* .	592
998.	*Efficacy of the Gospel*	597
999.	*The Folly of Pride and Boasting*	603
1000.	*Godly Jealousy the Duty of Ministers*	607
1001.	*St. Paul's Zeal illustrated and improved* . . .	613
1002.	*The Duty of Ministers*	620

Skeleton.		Page
1003.	*Self-Examination recommended*	623
1004.	*The Importance of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith alone*	626
1005.	*Conversion, and its Effects*	636
1006.	*Peter reproved by Paul*	641
1007.	*The Christian crucified with Christ*	648
1008.	*The Gospel preached to Abraham*	655
1009.	*The true Use of the Law*	660
1010.	*The Time and Manner of Christ's Incarnation*	668
1011.	*A Minister's chief Wish for his People*	670
1012.	*The Principles of Flesh and Spirit considered*	680
1013.	*The Fruits of the Flesh and of the Spirit contrasted,*	687
1014.	*Against Self-Deceit*	694
1015.	*The Cross of Christ*	702

DCCCCII.

PAUL'S LOVE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME.

Rom. i. 9—12. *God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; making request (if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God) to come unto you: for I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*

IT has been thought by some, that it would have been better for the Church if the Gospels only had been transmitted to posterity, and the Epistles had perished in oblivion. This impious sentiment originates altogether in men's hatred of the truth; and it argues as much ignorance of the Gospels, as it does ingratitude to God. The Gospels contain all the same truths as the Epistles; but the Epistles render them more clear. Never should we have had so complete a view of the correspondence between the Jewish and Christian dispensations, as we are favoured with in the Epistle to the Hebrews: nor would the doctrine of justification by faith alone have been so clearly defined, or so incontrovertibly established, if the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians had never existed. We are moreover indebted to the Epistles for a much clearer insight into practical religion, than we ever should have had without them. It is true, that the example of Christ is perfect, and that the precepts he has given us are perfect also; but we should never have known what heights of piety are attainable by "men of like passions with ourselves," if we had not known more of the Apostles than what is recorded of them in

the Gospels. In the Acts of the Apostles we behold much of their zeal and diligence; but in the Epistles, the full portrait of a Minister is drawn with a minuteness and accuracy which we should in vain look for in any other place. To go no further than to the words before us—what an exalted idea have we of the love which a Minister should bear towards his people, in this solemn declaration of St. Paul! Let us contemplate it awhile: let us consider the leading points which his words develope; and,

I. His love to the Church at Rome—

St. Paul was a man of a most enlarged heart: he loved all that loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; as well "those who had not seen his face in the flesh," as those who had been converted under his own Ministry. He knew the Christians at Rome only by report; yet he felt the most ardent affection for them; and shewed that affection,

1. By his incessant prayers for them—

[The love which exists among the men of this world leads them to regard each other's temporal welfare: but spiritual and Christian love has respect chiefly to the souls of men; and consequently exercises itself most in promoting their eternal welfare. It was thus that St. Paul manifested his love to the Christians at Rome: he prayed for them: he knew that God alone could make them truly happy; and that he would regard the intercessions of his people in their behalf: and therefore "he made mention of them always in his prayers," and laboured "without ceasing" to bring down upon them the blessings of Heaven.

Now this was a decisive proof of love. Indeed by this we all may try our love, and may ascertain whether it be merely natural, or truly Christian: yea all, husbands and wives, parents and children, Ministers and people, may here discern, not only the *nature* of their affection, as by a touchstone, but the *measure* of it, as by a scale; and, by examining into the constancy and fervor of their intercessions for others, may learn the state of their own souls before God. O that, like the Apostle, we could appeal to the heart-searching God, and "call him to witness," that we have this evidence at least of "serving him with our spirit in the Gospel of his Son!"]

2. By his earnest desire to visit them—

[Love naturally affects communion with the objects beloved. St. Paul no sooner heard of the piety of those at Rome,

Rome, than he conceived an ardent affection for them, and a determination of mind, if a favourable opportunity should present itself, to pay them a visit. For many years, occurrences had arisen to prevent the execution of his purpose[a]: but nothing could abate his desire of seeing them, when his way thither should be made clear. Hence, among his other petitions for them, he prayed particularly and constantly that God would be pleased to direct his way to them, and to prosper him in his journey towards them. This, in connexion with the former, was also a strong evidence of his love: for, had he loved them less, he might well have left them to the care of their spiritual fathers, and confined his own Ministry to those who were nearer to him and easier of access. Had they been the peculiar objects of his charge, and had he laboured for many years exclusively amongst them, we doubt not but that his desire to see them would have been still more ardent. At all events we are sure, that no Minister who truly loves his people and his work will be long absent from his flock without having this the constant language of his heart, "I long to see you!" He may be separated from them "in presence, but not in heart."]

But what were,

II. The particular objects of his intended visit to them—

Rome was then the most magnificent city in the universe: it was the seat of empire, the Capital of the world. But was it to gratify a vain curiosity, or to court popularity among the great, that the Apostle sought to go thither? No: he had far nobler ends in view: the true objects of his intended visit were,

1. The advancement of their welfare—

[The Apostle was honoured by God with a power of conferring miraculous gifts: and these, when conferred, tended greatly to strengthen the hands of those who preached the Gospel, and to confirm the faith of them that heard it[b]. To this therefore he might in part refer, when he spoke of "imparting to the Church some spiritual gifts." But he certainly desired to increase also the graces of the Lord's people; to confirm their faith, enliven their hope, and augment their joy. However exalted their characters were, there was yet abundant room for improvement; and he hoped to be a blessed instrument in the hands of God for the advancing and perfecting of his work in their souls. For this end, God is pleased to make use of his ministering servants. On them he confers the honour,

[a] Rom. xv. 22, 23.

[b] This is strongly marked in his appeal to the Galatians: Gal. iii. 2, 5.

honour, not merely of awakening men from the sleep of death, but of "building them up also on their most holy faith," and completing them, as a spiritual edifice, for his own immediate residence. O blessed work indeed! Well might the Apostle desire to be engaged in it, wherever his labours might be successfully employed: for surely no labour can be so great, no suffering so heavy, but it is richly compensated, if this end be in any measure produced.]

2. The comfort of his own soul—

[Next to the happiness of communion with God, is that of fellowship with his believing people. To be appreciated, it must be felt: no one can have any conception of that oneness of heart and mind which exists in the Lord's people, unless he himself has experienced it. When their faith is in lively exercise, and their souls are humbled in the dust, and their hearts overflow with love, who shall give us any adequate idea of their felicity? Certainly it is nearly allied to the happiness of heaven; or rather, it is an anticipation and foretaste of heaven itself. This happiness the Apostle assuredly expected to enjoy among the people at Rome: yea, this happiness does every faithful Minister enjoy, according to the degree in which his own soul is devoted to God, and the people to whom he ministers have imbibed his spirit.

O that it may be known and felt amongst us; and that we may increasingly reap this fruit of our intercourse with each other!]

IMPROVEMENT—

1. Let us be thankful to God, who has heard and answered our supplications—

[That you have remembered your Minister, we have no doubt: and "God is witness" that he has not been unmindful of you; and now our heavenly Benefactor has graciously renewed to us our opportunities of uniting together in our wonted exercises of prayer and praise. Let us then be thankful; yet "not in word only, but in deed and in truth." Let us consecrate ourselves to him afresh, and strive, with holy ardour, who shall serve him best. This is the true way in which to manifest our thankfulness to God. Our offices may differ, as the offices of the eye and hand; but, if all of us perform the proper duties of our station with care and diligence, he will accept our services, not according to the importance which we annex to them, but according to the mind with which they are performed.]

2. Let us continue to pray for his blesssing on our poor endeavours—

[It

[It is to no purpose that God has brought us together again, if he himself be not in the midst of us. "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water; but it is God alone that can give the increase." Let us therefore wait upon him continually. Let us go to him before we meet in the public assembly; and retire from thence to our closets again. Let all that we do be begun, continued, and ended in a humble dependence upon God. Then shall spiritual gifts be richly imparted to you; and the whole body of us be comforted and edified.]

DCCCCIII.

NO MAN TO BE ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL.

Rom. i. 16. *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth.*

THE Epistle to the Romans, though first in order, is by no means first in point of time; several having, in fact, been written before it. But in respect of importance, it justly deserves to take the lead of all the others. There is no other that is so full and comprehensive on the great subject of a sinner's justification before God; no other so orderly in its arrangement, or so argumentative in its statement; and perhaps no other that is, on the whole, so instructive. It was written to the Church at Rome, which, though not planted by St. Paul, had a distinguished place in his regard. He had long wished to visit that Church, but had been prevented, by a variety of circumstances, from carrying his purpose into execution. Now however he announced his intention of going to them the first opportunity, being desirous of "having some fruit among them even as he had had among other Gentiles." He had reason indeed to expect, that, in that opulent city, the abode of so many great and learned men, his ministrations would excite no small measure of contempt: but "he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ;" nor did he think he had any occasion to be ashamed of it; since "it was, and would be, the power of God to the salvation of all who received it in faith." It were well if all who profess to believe the Gospel, were like-minded with him in this particular: but there are multitudes who,

who, notwithstanding they call themselves Christians, are in reality ashamed of the Gospel. That we may assist such persons in discovering their own character, and induce them to walk worthy of their holy profession, we shall shew,

I. When we may be said to be ashamed of the Gospel—

Few perhaps imagine that any such evil is imputable to them: but they, in fact, are guilty of it, who, through fear of that disgrace which attaches to the Gospel, are deterred,

1. From seeking instruction in it—

[Many, from what they have seen and heard of the effects of the Gospel, have a secret conviction that it has an excellence far beyond any they have hitherto discovered: and they would be glad to be better instructed in it: but they dare not go where it is more fully and plainly set forth, because of the odium to which they will expose themselves. They are aware that the very circumstance of attending upon the Ministry of one who is stigmatized as evangelical, will tend to fix a stigma on their names also, and to produce an apprehension in the minds of their friends, that they are beginning to favour these obnoxious tenets. If the same doctrines were delivered in a church, where they might attend without suspicion, they would gladly avail themselves of the opportunity to hear them: but, if any sacrifice of character is to be made in order to get instruction, they will rather lose the benefit, than purchase it at such a price. Even a religious book, should it happen to be in their hands when a friend unexpectedly calls in upon them, is put away in haste, lest it should draw down a measure of disgrace upon them. Even the Bible itself they would be afraid to have seen upon their table, if they were supposed to be reading it with a view to the welfare of their souls. I ask then, Whence does all this proceed? and what does it argue, but that they are ashamed of the Gospel of Christ? They have none of these feelings in reference to other places of worship, or to other books, no, not even to plays and novels: it is plain therefore that the Gospel is that which creates the offence; and that a dread of the odium attached to it diverts them from prosecuting the knowledge of it. Such persons may obtain mercy of the Lord, even as did Nicodemus, whose children they are; yea, they may, like him, become distinguished ornaments of the Gospel: but they are in great danger lest God give them over to their unworthy fears, and leave them to "perish for lack of knowledge."]

2. From making an open profession of it—

[After

[After that men have attained the knowledge of the truth, the same evil principle frequently operates in their hearts, to make them ashamed of confessing it. They see that the followers of Christ are still at this day, no less than in the Apostolic age, "a sect that is everywhere spoken against[a];" and they cannot bring their minds to participate their reproach. They would partake of the blessings of the Gospel, without "partaking of its affliction:" they would enjoy their Lord's crown, but not bear his cross. But such cowardice is expressly designated as a being "ashamed of the Gospel[b];" and it will assuredly rob them of all the advantages which they desire to possess. If they would be Christ's disciples indeed, they must "deny themselves, and take up their cross daily, and follow Christ[c]." Like Moses, they must "*choose* to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming *the reproach of Christ* greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt[d]:" they must not be contented with honouring Christ in secret, but must "follow him without the camp bearing his reproach[e]." Indeed it is not reputation merely that they must be willing to sacrifice, but life also, for Christ's sake: and, if they stop short of this, they "lose their souls" for ever[f]. In some respects these are in a worse state than they of whom we have before spoken; because they sin against greater light and knowledge, and are guilty of infinitely greater ingratitude towards their Lord, whose love and mercy they inwardly acknowledge, and from whom they expect all the blessings of grace and glory. To these therefore our Lord speaks in very awful terms, and warns them, that as they are ashamed of him, and deny him, "he will be ashamed of them, and deny them, in the presence of his Father and his holy angels[g]." "The fearful, no less than the unbelieving," will have their portion in the lake of fire at the last day[h]. "If we will not suffer with Christ, we cannot reign with him[i]." "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; but with the mouth confession is made, and must be made, unto salvation[k]."]

3. From walking worthy of it—

[Whilst the *principles* of the Gospel are by the world at large accounted "foolishness[l]," the *practice* enjoined by it is no less offensive to them, on account of its contrariety to all the desires and habits of the carnal mind. Hence they who profess the Gospel are often led into compliances, which are unsuitable to their high calling, and dishonourable to their pro-

[a] Acts xxviii. 22. [b] 1 Tim. i. 8. [c] Matt. xvi. 24, 25.
[d] Heb. xi. 25, 26 [e] Heb. xiii. 13. [f] Matt. x. 38, 39.
[g] Matt. x. 32, 33. & Mark viii. 35, 38. [h] Rev. xxi. 8.
[i] 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12. [k] Rom. x. 10. [l] 1 Cor. i. 18.

profession. Under the idea of "becoming all things to all men," they belie their consciences, and betray the cause which they are pledged to serve. They forget that Paul's compliances were to *save others*[m]; whilst theirs are only to *screen themselves*. But this is "to put their light under a bushel," when their duty is "to make it shine before men[n]." They are "not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them[o]," and, like Noah, to "condemn that world[p]" which sets itself against the Majesty of heaven. Instead of "following a multitude to do evil," the Christian is to consider himself as set by God to be "a light in the world," that he may "hold forth to others, in the whole of his spirit and conduct, the word of life[q]." And all who are kept by fear from thus adorning the Gospel, will be numbered amongst hypocrites and dissemblers with God[r]. If a den of lions were to be the recompence of our fidelity to God, we are not to be intimidated; we are not to be ashamed[s]. The Lord Jesus Christ "endured the cross, and despised the shame" for us[t]; and we must brave contempt and death in their most terrific forms for him.]

Thus all who are deterred from "following the Lord fully," are, in fact, "ashamed of Christ." But how unreasonable this conduct is, will appear, whilst we shew,

II. Why we should not be so—

Certainly, if any one might reasonably give way to shame, Paul might, when he contemplated the preaching of the Gospel at Rome. For as Rome was the seat of wealth and science, the preaching of the cross was likely to be peculiarly offensive to them, inasmuch as it poured contempt on all that was valued there, and required that they should place all their hopes for time and eternity on a poor despised Jew, who had suffered the most ignominious of all deaths from the hands of his own countrymen. But Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel; nor had he any real reason to be so: for,

1. It is a revelation of God's grace to man—

[A wonderful mystery it is; a mystery which all "the angels of heaven desire to look into," and which, as an expression

[m] 1 Cor. ix. 19—23. "To gain the more." Observe how often that is repeated.
[n] Matt. v. 14—16. [o] Eph. v. 11. [p] Heb. xi. 7.
[q] Phil. ii. 15, 16. [r] Gal. ii. 11—13. [s] Dan. vi. 10.
[t] Heb. xii. 2.

pression of God's good-will to man, brings the highest possible glory to God himself. In it a way of salvation is provided for fallen man; a way exactly suited to man's necessities, and at the same time displaying in perfect harmony all the perfections of the Godhead. It exhibits the Father sending his only dear Son to take upon him our nature, and to "bear our sins in his own body on the tree." It represents the co-equal, co-eternal Son of God actually fulfilling that very office, and "reconciling us to God by his own blood." It sets forth also the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity, undertaking to apply that salvation to the souls of men, and by his almighty power to render them "meet for the inheritance" prepared for them.

Now I would ask, What is here to be ashamed of? Is that, in which all "the wisdom of God, and the power of God," are concentrated and displayed[u], an object which we should blush to acknowledge and confess? Is that, which is the one theme of adoration and thanksgiving to all the hosts of heaven, fit to be disowned by man on earth, so that the very mention of it shall suffuse his face with shame? Shall sin, in all its varied forms, stalk abroad with unblushing effrontery, and this glorious mystery be veiled for fear of man's reproach? Abhorred be the thought! Let the man that has ever been ashamed of the Gospel, be ashamed of his own extreme folly and impiety: and let that which is so glorious in the eyes of all the heavenly hosts, be henceforth glorious in our eyes; and let us "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of it[x]."]

2. It is God's instrument for the salvation of a ruined world—

[Look back, and see what it is that has been the means of saving so many myriads of our fellow-creatures, when of the fallen angels not so much as one has ever been saved? What saved Adam, but the Gospel, which promised that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head?" What saved Abraham, but the Gospel, which was preached to him in these words; "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed?" Could you go up to the third heavens, and hear, as Paul did, the songs of the whole heavenly choir, you would hear but one note amongst them all, ascribing "salvation to God and to the Lamb for ever." Is this then a subject for *us* to be ashamed of? Shall we be ashamed of that, which alone has put a difference between us and devils? of that, which is "the rod of God's strength," whereby he has brought millions, through seas of difficulty, to the full enjoyment of the heavenly Canaan? The brazen serpent that healed

[u] 1 Cor. i. 24. [x] Phil. iii. 8.

healed the Israelites in the wilderness, though it was only a piece of brass, became an object of idolatrous regard: and shall we make "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God" an object of shame and contempt? If we marvel at them for giving God's honour to a piece of brass, what wonder must it create amongst all the heavenly hosts, that any creature, to whom the Gospel of salvation comes, should treat it but with the profoundest veneration, and the most ardent gratitude!]

3. It is actually effectual for the salvation of every one that believeth—

[Never did it fail in any instance: it is equally effectual for "Jew or Gentile," and for the vilest, as well as the best, of the human race. It will leave none under the guilt and condemnation of their sins, none under the power and pollution of them. The righteousness which it provides for sinners is so pure and perfect, that, when clothed in it, they stand before God without spot or blemish. The grace treasured up for them in their living Head is so abundant, that the weakest of mankind, even though he be opposed by all the hosts of hell, shall find it sufficient for him. It will not bring him out of six difficulties, and leave him to perish in the seventh[y]; but "will keep him to the end[z]," and suffer "nothing to pluck him out of his Redeemer's hands[a]." Is this then a thing to be ashamed of? and shall *they* be ashamed of it who profess to expect salvation by it? Methinks, a man must be almost as destitute of reason as of piety, who can account it any ground for blushing, that he loves, and admires, and glories in the cross of Christ; yea, and determines never to his latest hour to glory in any thing else[b].]

ADDRESS—

1. Let not any of you then be ashamed of the Gospel—

[Let not *the rich;* for it will make you richer than ten thousand worlds: "the riches of Christ are absolutely unsearchable[c]." Let not *the poor;* for it raises them to an equality with the greatest upon earth, and gives them crowns and kingdoms for their inheritance[d]. Let not *the learned* be ashamed of it; for in it is contained "the manifold wisdom of God;" and even angels are made wiser by the revelation of it to the Church[e]. Let not *the unlearned;* for it will "make them wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." Let not any thus dishonour it, till they cease to need its blessings, or have found a substitute worthy to supersede it. God is "not

[y] Job v. 19. [z] 1 Cor. i. 8. [a] John x. 28.
[b] Gal. vi. 14. [c] Eph. iii. 8. [d] Jam. i. 9. & iv. 5.
[e] Eph. iii. 10.

"not ashamed to be called our God[f]:" Oh! be not ye ashamed to become, and to be called, his people.]

2. Let not the Gospel be ashamed of you—.

[Many, alas! who profess to love the Gospel, are in their conduct a disgrace to it. Their pride, their passion, their worldly-mindedness, perhaps too, their want of truth and honesty, together with a variety of other evils predominant in them, cause "the way of truth to be evil spoken of[g]," and "the very name of God to be blasphemed." In every age, and in every Church, such instances occur; and lamentable it is to say, that no people are more unconscious of their guilt than they. It is on account of such persons that our Lord says, "Woe unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come: but woe unto him by whom the offence cometh! it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the depths of the sea[h]." Look to it then, ye professors of godliness, that this tremendous evil be not imputable to you: and endeavour so to walk, "that the adversary may have no evil thing to say of you," and "that they may be ashamed, who falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ[i]."]

[f] Heb. xi. 16. [g] 2 Pet. ii. 2.
[h] Matt. xviii. 6, 7. [i] Tit. ii. 8. & 1 Pet. iii. 16.

DCCCCIV.

THE LOST STATE OF THE GENTILE WORLD.

Rom. i. 20, 21. *They are without excuse, because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God.*

HERE the plan of the Epistle begins to be developed. St. Paul, intending to prove that there was one only way of salvation for the whole race of mankind, begins with shewing, that the Gentile world were altogether guilty before God, and lying under a just sentence of condemnation. In the next chapter he shews the same respecting the Jews: and, in the third, he confirms, from the scriptures of truth, all that he has spoken respecting both of the one and the other; and from thence deduces the general conclusion, that they are all shut up unto the faith of Christ, and must seek salvation by him alone.

In this present discourse we shall have to consider the state of the Gentiles, against whom universally the

the judgments of God are denounced; "the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," and especially against "those who hold (or imprison) the truth in unrighteousness," which they have done in all ages of the world[a].

But that we may bring the matter home to ourselves also, we shall shew,

I. How inexcusable they are for their conduct towards God—

The Gentiles have in every age had sufficient opportunities of attaining the knowledge of God—

[The things of God which are exclusively made known to us in the book of revelation, they could not be acquainted with, because the light of revelation was not vouchsafed to them: but the book of creation was open to them, and equally legible to all; and from thence they might acquire a considerable knowledge of God's nature and perfections. In beholding the heavenly bodies all moving in their orbits; and the earth so abundantly furnished with every thing for the accommodation of man; and man himself the most noble of all God's works, his body so curiously wrought, and his soul so richly endowed; in beholding these things, I say, they could not but know, that there was some superior Being, who had formed them all. They could not but look upon any work of art,—a house, for instance, or a watch, or any thing that required skill,—but their minds must of necessity be led to contemplate the maker of it: and a similar necessity was imposed upon them by all the works of creation. Having traced up every thing to a First Cause, they must see that, as He was the cause of all that existed besides himself, there could be nothing to give existence to him; and that consequently, he must be self-existent and eternal. Moreover, they must see, from the immensity and the excellency of all his works, that there can be no limit to his wisdom, his power, or his goodness; but that these perfections of his must of necessity be infinite. That these deductions were open to them we are sure, because some of their more enlightened philosophers have actually made these discoveries, though certainly with less clearness and precision than we by the means of revelation are enabled to do. And God himself affirms it in the verses preceding our text; saying, that the things concerning him which were invisible to human eyes, were nevertheless "clearly to be seen and understood in his visible

[a] ver. 18.

visible works, even his eternal power and Godhead[b]." St. Paul also, when addressing Heathens, quotes to them their own Poets, to shew, that, in the representations which they foolishly made of the Supreme Being, they did in fact violate the law that was in their own minds, and act contrary to the light that was within them[c].]

But they did not improve these opportunities aright—

[They *entertained most unworthy conceptions of the Deity.* —Instead of regarding him as a Spirit who pervaded all space, they "made images of him like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things;" and then bowed down to the work of their own hands, and said, "Deliver me; for thou art my god[d]." What could be more insulting to the Divine Majesty than such conduct as this?

Moreover *they testified no gratitude towards him for all the benefits that he conferred upon them.*—Innumerable were the benefits which in constant succession he conferred upon them[e]; yet "were they not thankful[f]," but abused his gifts, instead of taking occasion from them to love and glorify the Giver.

They sought not in any thing to please him, nor cared however much they might displease him.—The abominations they committed cannot even be thought of but with horror and amazement[g]. And, whilst they were thus bent on the gratification of their lusts and appetites, and purposely cast out of their minds all those notices of a Supreme Being, which from time to time arose to check them in their excesses[h], they were given over to the dominion of every hateful disposition that could assimilate them to the god of this world, whose willing servants they were. What an assemblage of evils was there accumulated in their character[i]!——— Yet was this representation of them by no means overcharged. Their own Historians, and Poets, and Philosophers have justified every word that is here spoken. What the Poet said of the Cretans might, with few exceptions, be applied to all; "The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow-bellies[k]," a wretched compound of falsehood, and cruelty, and abominable sensuality.

Nor were they merely impelled to these things by the impetuosity of their own passions; for, *whilst they had internal convictions of the impiety of this conduct, they deliberately approved and honoured those who were most addicted to it.*]

From hence it appears how inexcusable they were, and how justly sentenced to eternal condemnation—

[Had

[b] ver. 19, 20.
[c] Acts xvii. 28, 29.
[d] Comp. ver. 23. with Isai. xliv. 9—20.
[e] Acts xiv. 16, 17.
[f] ver. 20.
[g] ver. 26, 27.
[h] ver. 28.
[i] ver. 29—31.
[k] Tit. i. 12.

[Had they been able to plead *ignorance*, they would have had some kind of excuse: but they could not do this: for "they did really know God;" but "did not choose to retain him in their knowledge:" and so far were they from having this plea to extenuate their crimes, that the light which they resisted constitutes the heaviest aggravation of their guilt: "This is their condemnation, that they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil[1]." Again, if they could not plead ignorance, neither could they plead *necessity;* for they were under no necessity to dishonour God in this way, either from without or from within. They were perfectly free agents in all that they did: and though they could not, nor can any Child of man, fulfil all the Divine will, or of themselves do any thing spiritually good, yet they might have abstained from much which they did amiss, and done much which they neglected to do: and therefore they are justly chargeable with all the guilt that they contracted; and are as reprehensible before God for not using the powers which they possessed, as they would have been, if those powers had been ever so enlarged.

All that has been spoken in reference to the Heathen in former days, is still applicable to them at this time. The notices of a Deity may be much more obscured in the minds of some than of others; and the criminality of all must be estimated in some measure according to the peculiar circumstances under which they live: but, inasmuch as all violate the law that is in their own minds, and neglect to improve the advantages they enjoy, they all are obnoxious to the charge contained in our text, and are therefore "without excuse."]

But, that we may bring this matter home to ourselves, let us consider,

II. How much more inexcusable we are, if we resemble them—

We have opportunities of knowing God, far beyond any that the Heathen ever enjoyed—

[Even in reading the book of creation, we, by means of our superior advantages, are enabled to see much that was hid from them, or, at least, to discover with incomparably greater clearness the unity and perfections of God, which they could but faintly and doubtingly discern. But we have a revelation, wherein God has proclaimed his own name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, trangression, and sin; and that will by no means

[1] John iii. 19.

means clear the guilty[l]." We have also a yet clearer revelation of God in the person of his own Son, who is "the image of the invisible God[m]," "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person[n]." Nor is it from *words* only that we discover his excellency, but from *actions* also. We behold our God incarnate: we behold his glory veiled, so that, without being blinded with the overwhelming splendor of his majesty, we may contemplate him, and familiarize ourselves, as it were, with his adorable perfections. In this especially the most ignorant amongst us excels all the greatest philosophers of Greece and Rome; we behold the attribute of *mercy;* we can tell how *that* may be exercised in perfect consistency with *justice*: we can tell how God can be "just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly[o]." In a word, all the wonders of redeeming love are set before us in terms so plain, that "he who runs may read them."]

But how have we improved these advantages?

[Have we glorified God *as God*, or his blessed Son *as the one hope of a ruined world?* Alas! alas! if we take a survey of our own spirit and conduct through life, we shall find, that there has been but little difference between us and Heathens.

Consider *our defects.*—"We have not glorified God as God, neither been thankful." What might justly have been expected of persons privileged as we have been? Might it not have been reasonably hoped that persons redeemed from death and hell by the blood of God's only dear Son should have been incessantly pouring out their souls in grateful adorations, and dedicating to his service their every faculty, and every instant of their time? Methinks, it should have been a work of pain and self-denial to devote so much as a thought to any other subject, especially to any subject unconnected with this. But have our hearts been thus exercised? Has it been thus our delight to anticipate the employment of heaven? Or rather, have not the wonders of redemption had far less influence on our minds than the things of time and sense? Yea, have they not for the most part been passed by, as though they were only "a cunningly devised fable," wherein we had no interest?

Consider also *our errors.*—We have not, it is true, transformed our God into an idol: but we have had scarcely more worthy conceptions of him than if he had been an idol. *In theory* we have ascribed to him the different perfections of his nature; but *in practice* we have denied them all—his omniscience, his holiness, his justice, and his truth, by vainly imagining, either that he did not behold, or would not punish, our iniquities. We, as he himself tells us, have "thought him to be

[l] Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. [m] Col. i. 15. [n] Heb. i. 3.
[o] Rom. iii. 26. & iv. 5.

be even such an one as ourselves:" whilst exalting in our minds his attribute of mercy, we have, in fact, divested him of all that belongs to him as the Governor of the Universe: A God all mercy, is a God unjust.

Consider yet further *our excesses.*—These, as to the overt act, do not proceed to such extremes, as were common among the Gentiles: but the abominations that we do commit, sufficiently shew, that we are not restrained by any regard to God, so much as by public laws and popular opinion. Christianity having elevated the general tone of morals, those hideous crimes which were but too frequent among the Gentiles are scarcely so much as thought of amongst us: but, in all that we can do consistently with the laws of society, we are not a whit superior to the Heathen themselves. What juster picture could the Apostle have drawn, if he had intended to describe, what is improperly called, the Christian world? Take us as a people, and say, Whether we are not "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; yea, whether we be not full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whether we be not whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, *without understanding*, covenant-breakers, implacable, unmerciful[p]: and say particularly, whether, notwithstanding we know the evil of such things, we do not both practice them ourselves, and choose for our friends and companions those who are guilty of the like practices? Who, I would ask, are the favourites with the world? the godly, and they who are conformed to the Saviour's image? No: but the ungodly, who by their conduct and example sanction all the corruptions of the human heart[q].]

How inexcusable then must we be!

[Verily, "the men of Ninevah will rise up in judgment against us;" yea, the Gentiles also, throughout the universe, will condemn us, because of the extent to which we have imitated their evils, and abused our infinitely superior advantages. "The Gospel which we enjoy, if it prevail not with us to put away our sins, and to walk as Christ walked," will only prove to us "a savour of death" to our more aggravated and heavier condemnation[r]. If Christ had not come and spoken unto us, we had not had sin: but now we have no cloke for our sin[s].]

SEE then,

1. How thankful we should be for the Gospel of Christ!

[Doubtless

[p] ver. 29—31. [q] ver. 32. [r] 2 Cor. ii. 16.
[s] John xv. 22.

[Doubtless one reason why the world was left without a Saviour for four thousand years, was, that the world might see how little they could do to restore themselves to the favour and image of God. At no period were the powers of human intellect carried to a greater extent, than at the time of our Saviour's advent: but what did philosophy effect? what did it effect even amongst those who most exalted it? Nothing to any good purpose. The poets and philosophers themselves were as much addicted to sin, as the vulgar, whom they looked down upon with contempt: and, if it were not for the light of the Gospel, we should be as much immersed in sensuality as they. Let this be borne in mind, that, whether born in a Christian or a Heathen land, we are all by nature equally corrupt and helpless; and all need a Saviour, the one as much as the other. To *us* a Saviour is revealed, and precisely such an one as we stand in need of. O let us then bless our God for the revelation of his grace: let us be thankful that we see what many prophets and kings desired to see, but desired it in vain: and let Christ, who is the sum and substance of the Gospel, be truly "precious" to all our souls.]

2. What effect our superior advantages should produce upon us—

[We should aspire after the highest possible attainments, in love and gratitude, in purity and holiness. We should aim at "glorifying God as God," and Christ as Christ. Let us then contemplate Christ in all his offices, as our Prophet, as our Priest, as our King. Let us not be contented with a theoretical or superficial survey of his character, but let us search into it, and ruminate upon it, and get our souls suitably impressed with it. Let us get such views of him, as shall render us insensible to all created excellency; as a man who looks at the meridian sun is blinded to all inferior objects. Let us in these holy exercises seek to obtain a conformity to his image; agreeably to what the Apostle has said, "We beholding his glory are changed into the same image from glory *to* glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord[t]." Let no measure of resemblance to him ever satisfy us; no efforts in his service ever content us. Let us, even if we have attained an Apostolic measure of zeal and holiness, "forget it all, and reach forward" to higher attainments[u]. Let our trust in him be simple; our fellowship with him intimate; our confidence in him assured; our expectation from him large; our devotion to him ardent; our obedience uniform; our surrender of ourselves to him entire, and unreserved. Let us live for him, and "walk worthy of him;" so that HE may be glorified, yea, and "be magnified in us" also, both in life and death[x]."]

[t] 2 Cor. iii. 18. [u] Phil. iii. 13, 14. [x] Phil. i. 20.

DCCCCV.

THOSE WHO JUDGE OTHERS, JUDGED.

Rom. ii. 3—5. *Thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*

HUMAN-nature is the same in every age, and every place: external circumstances may make an external difference; but internally, every Child of man is alike alienated from God, and alike needs the salvation revealed in the Gospel. To prove this, is the scope of the three first chapters of this epistle. In the foregoing chapter, it is proved in reference to the Gentiles; and in this, in reference to the Jews. But to which of these the words which we have just read are addressed, admits of doubt. We think however, that the transition to the Jews is at the commencement of this chapter, notwithstanding they are not expressly mentioned till the 17th verse: and the not mentioning of their name proceeded, we apprehend, from a delicacy of feeling, and a fear lest he might, by a too direct attack, arm, as it were, their minds against him. This certainly accords with the very tender regard which he manifests towards them throughout this whole epistle: and it was the less necessary to mention them, because their contempt of the Gentiles was so fully known, and so universally acknowledged. But the characters that are addressed are the same, whether amongst Jews or Gentiles: and, as the whole force of the address will be invalidated if we do not clearly discern to whom it is delivered, we will,

I. Shew to whom the expostulation is addressed—

There were among the Gentiles some who in their public discourses inculcated a purer morality than that which was generally practised, but in their own life

life and conversation were guilty of the very crimes which they condemned: and so it is at this day among those who call themselves Christians. The disposition which is here reproved shews itself,

1. In the world towards each other—

[From whatever it may proceed, whether from envy or uncharitableness, there is a disposition in all to view others in an unfavourable light, at the same time that they themselves are faulty, either in the same precise way, or in other ways to the same extent. Indeed such is the extreme blindness of human-nature, that the more any are under the dominion of pride, or vanity, or covetousness, or ambition, the more they hate those in whom the same evils are predominant: the proud man cannot endure the proud; and so of the rest.

But if this disposition manifests itself amongst equals, much more does it among those who are placed at some distance from each other, whether the difference be in *age*, or *rank*, or *relation*, or *general habits and dispositions*. The old condemn the follies of the young; and the young the severity of the old—The rich inveigh against the idleness or dishonesty of the poor; the poor, against the selfishness and oppressiveness of the rich—Parents complain of their children; children, of their parents—Masters of their servants; and servants, of their masters—In like manner, the bigot and the free-thinker, the prodigal and the penurious, the hermit and the gay, all love to indulge in mutual criminations; all overlooking their own peculiar failings, and condemning without reserve the characteristic failings of others.]

2. In the world, towards those who profess religion—

[To be religious is, with the generality, the greatest of all crimes: there is no other so little tolerated, so universally condemned. Opprobrious names are universally affixed to the godly: and the current title, whatever it may be, is sufficient to make a man despised, and shunned, and dreaded, as a public nuisance all the world over. Supposing for a moment that religious persons were unwise in laying so great a stress on religion, is there no evil in neglecting God and our immortal souls? yet the world overlook all their own impiety, as if there were no harm in it, and set no bounds to their invectives against those who serve and honour God. It may be thought that the wild enthusiast alone is the object of their aversion: But were the Apostles wild enthusiasts? Was our blessed Lord wanting in wisdom and prudence? Yet were they all regarded "as the filth of the earth, and the off-

scouring

scouring of all things;" and the very men who scrupled not to suborn false witnesses, and to imbrue their hands in the blood of an innocent man, could find no evil in themselves, but only in those who were the objects of their implacable aversion.

If an occasion arise where a professor of religion acts unworthy of his profession, what a cause of triumph is it to an ungodly world! With what exultation are his faults imputed to the whole body of religious people, and all of them condemned as hypocrites alike! The sins of the ungodly and profane are all reputed as nothing in comparison of his crime; and the whole Church of God is vilified, and God himself also is blasphemed, as approving and justifying the iniquity that has been committed.]

3. In religious persons towards the world—

[It would be well if this partiality in judging were confined to the ungodly: but there is a great tendency to it in those who profess religion. Doubtless in proportion as real humility is formed in the heart, this evil disposition will be mortified: but, in proportion as pride and conceit are unsubdued, the attendant evil of uncharitableness will betray itself. We have a most remarkable example of this in David, when he had relapsed into a state of grievous departure from God. When Nathan told him of a man who had taken a poor man's lamb, behold, nothing would suffice to expiate the crime but the forfeiture of life itself: so atrocious did this light offence appear, when all his own unparalleled enormities were forgotten. We grant that this was a very extreme case; and that nothing like it is commonly to be imputed to those who profess religion: But is there not amongst many professors an utter contempt of the ungodly? Do they not frequently speak of their irreligious neighbours with contemptuous asperity, as wretched, blind, carnal creatures? The Jews designated the Gentiles as dogs, and as cursed; whilst they fancied themselves the chosen people of God: and is not a great deal of the same spirit to be seen amongst what are called the religious world? The ignorance and ungodliness of the men of this world are at once conceded as just grounds of their eternal condemnation; whilst the pride and uncharitableness, and ten thousand other evils that are found but too frequently amongst these contemptuous professors, are passed over as venial, or perhaps as having no existence in their hearts. How different was the lesson taught us by our Lord, who, when the Rich Youth came to inquire of him the way to heaven, "*loved him*," notwithstanding he knew that the love of earthly things would ultimately overcome all those better desires which occupied his mind! Our divine Master *loved him*

him for the good that was in him, though he foresaw it would prove ineffectual for the final welfare of his soul: whereas the great mass of religious professors would have lost sight of all the good that was in him, and have treated him with unqualified contempt. But among those who with great confidence "cry, Lord, Lord," there are many who will be found in as bad a condition as he: and the Disciple who betrayed our Lord with a kiss, will be found in no happier plight, than they who apprehended him with swords and staves.]

4. In religious people towards each other—

[Strange as it may seem, the different sects of religious people are as ready to anathematize each other, as to condemn those who cast off all religion. It is even an avowed tenet in the Church of Rome, that they who are not of her communion cannot be saved. And there is not a little of that same bigotry existing amongst the different professors of the Protestant faith. To be of their party is almost of itself a qualification for heaven; and a dissent from it a preparative for hell. Blessed be God! this intolerant spirit has of late years greatly abated[a]: but still it prevails to an awful extent, and gives but too just occasion for sceptics and infidels to triumph. But even amongst persons of the same religious community this propensity to judge and condemn one another greatly prevails. The weak will judge the strong, and the strong despise the weak. Persons, whose situations totally disqualify them for estimating aright the conduct of others who are differently circumstanced, will yet take upon them to determine with confidence the line of conduct that should be pursued, and to pass a sentence of condemnation on those who walk not in the way that seems good to them. In truth, there are but few who do not need that reproof: "Who art thou that judgest another? To his own Master he standeth or falleth."]

Thus we see to whom the expostulation in our text is addressed; namely, to all who "judge others, whilst they themselves do the same things," or things equally reprehensible. We proceed now to,

II. Consider the address itself—

This is extremely pointed. The interrogations shew how fearfully these persons delude themselves. The address is, in fact, an appeal to the consciences of the persons addressed; and it constitutes them judges in their own cause. It shews to all such uncharitable

[a] Since the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

charitable persons, what an awful state they themselves are in:

1. How vain their hopes!

[All the fore-mentioned characters imagine, that they themselves have nothing to fear: but they are all in a state displeasing to God, "whose judgment is according to truth against them that do such things[b]." Can any man suppose that a mere profession of religion will pass with God for the actual experience of it in the heart? or that a forwardness to condemn others will be a substitute for the performance of our own duties? Will God form his judgment upon the partial grounds which we take for the forming of ours? Will he admit as just the estimate which we have made of our own character, or be content to try us by the standard which we have used in trying ourselves? No: his law is perfect; and by that he will try all to whom that law has been revealed. He will weigh us all in the balance of the sanctuary; he will "try the hearts," and "weigh the spirits," of the children of men: he will "not judge according to the appearance, but will judge righteous judgment." We appeal then to all, Shall these uncharitable hypocrites escape? O thou, who hast thus deceived thyself hitherto, what dost thou now think? "Thinkest thou, that, because thou knowest more than others, or makest a greater profession of religion than others, thou shalt escape? Know, that such a hope is vain: "*We are sure*[c]" that, if thou humble not thyself as an undone sinner, and flee not for refuge to the Lord Jesus Christ, the vengeance of God shall overtake thee; and thou shalt experience the fate which thou art so ready to award to others.]

2. How aggravated their guilt!

[God has graciously exercised much "forbearance and long-suffering" towards thee; and thou takest occasion from thence to conclude well of thy state, and to sit in judgment upon others who appear less favoured than thyself. But is this the end for which God has borne with thee, and displayed towards thee all the riches of his goodness? Was not his design in it all "to lead thee to repentance?" Was not *that* the proper tendency of all "his goodness?" Should it not have humbled thee as unworthy of such mercy? Should it not have filled thy heart with gratitude for such distinguishing favour? Should it not have quickened thee to return to God, and to requite him to the best of thy power? Consider, "O man," whether such be not the improvement which thou shouldst have made of all these mercies? and ask thyself, Whether the neglecting to improve them thus be not in fact to "despise

[b] ver. 2. [c] ib.

"despise them?" Yes: in overlooking thine own sins, and in passing judgment upon others, thou art "hardening thyself in impenitence," and pouring contempt on God himself. Alas! thou hast little thought what guilt thou hast been contracting. Thou worldly man that judgest the religious, and thou religious man that judgest the world, when wilt thou turn thy thoughts inward, and pass judgment on thyself? Know that, till thou art brought to a more equitable spirit, as it respects thyself, and a more charitable spirit, as it respects thy neighbour, thou art a despiser of God, an usurper of his prerogative, and "a judge of the law itself," even of that law whereby thou thyself art to be judged[d]. But this most awfully augments thy guilt, and prepares thee daily for a more aggravated condemnation.]

3. How fearful their prospects!

[There is "a day wherein God will judge the world in righteousness." Man has his day[e], and God has his[f]. The present is a day of *grace:* but that which is coming is "a day of *wrath.*" What a fearful appellation is this! a day of *wrath!* or, as it is elsewhere called, "*the day of the perdition* of ungodly men[g]!" Oh hear it, and tremble, all ye who are judging others, and neglecting to judge yourselves. Against this day ye are heaping up wrath: ye are adding to the mass day by day: load upon load, mountain upon mountain, ye are piling up; and under this accumulated weight must your souls lie to all eternity. Ah! little do you think what your employment is: little do you think what shall be the issue of all your impenitence and obduracy. But thus it will be. That day is appointed expressly with a view to "the revealing," and displaying before the assembled universe, "the righteous judgment of God." Every sin that is committed will then be brought to light; "and every one will be judged according to what he hath done in the body, whether it be good or evil." Then, whether ye will or not, your attention shall be fixed upon *your own* sins: you will have nothing to do then with the sins *of others.* Oh! begin *now,* whilst time is afforded you, to search out *your own* iniquities, and to seek the remission of them through the blood of Christ.]

We will conclude this awful subject with a few words of ADVICE—

1. Do not occupy yourselves too much about others, but rather take heed unto yourselves—

[There are situations, no doubt, wherein we are called to judge: nor are we ever so to lay aside the office of judging, as

[d] Jam. iv. 11. [e] 1 Cor. iv. 3. See the Greek.
[f] 1 Cor. iv. 5. [g] 2 Pet. iii. 7.

as to think well of those who are guilty of all manner of sin; or to commit ourselves to those, whom we have good reason to think treacherous and deceitful. Nor need we so forbear judging, as to be satisfied with the state of those who live in a total neglect of God and of their own souls. On the contrary, we ought to weep over them, and pray for them, and to labour by all possible means for their salvation. But our chief concern must be with ourselves. Here our scrutiny cannot be too exact, or our anxiety too great. Here we should be afraid of entertaining a good opinion on insufficient grounds. We should judge ourselves, that we may not be judged of the Lord. Search then, and try your every way: and, not venturing to trust your own efforts, pray earnestly to God, and say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting[h]."]

2. Above all things, seek to know your perishing need of a Saviour—

[This is the grand scope of the Apostle's argument: he is endeavouring to convince all, both Jews and Gentiles, that they stand in need of the salvation which Christ has purchased for us by his own blood. There is in the generality a fear of seeing themselves in too humiliating a point of view: but this can never be: the more we are abased in our own eyes, the more we shall be exalted in the sight of God. It is "the sick that need the physician:" and the more sensible we are of our disorder, the more we shall value the Lord Jesus Christ. Were there indeed any doubt of his sufficiency to save us, we might well be afraid of viewing our sins in all their extent: but "his blood will cleanse from all sin;" and "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." In him all fulness dwells: and you need not be afraid of seeing yourselves "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked," when you hear him counselling you to come to him for gold that shall enrich you, and clothing that shall cover you, and eye-salve that shall restore your sight[i]." Be nothing, yea, "less than nothing," in yourselves; and He will be to you all that your heart can desire, "your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."]

[h] Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. [i] Rev. v. 17, 18.

DCCCCVI.

THE RULE OF GOD'S FUTURE JUDGMENT.

Rom. ii. 6—11. *Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them, who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek*

seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God.

IN reading the Apostolic writings, we should attend, not only to the doctrines that are inculcated, but to the manner in which they are inculcated; for writing, as the Apostles did, entirely under the influence of love, they have given us many valuable lessons, which escape the notice of the superficial observer, but amply repay the search of those, who investigate them with deeper attention, and desire to imbibe their spirit. It is of no small importance to learn how to combat prejudice with success. This is rarely done by an open and direct attack: it is far better to attempt it by a more circuitous mode, namely, by establishing such truths, as shall serve to give juster views to the mind. In this way the fabric of error, which would have withstood any rude assault, is undermined, and falls, ere the person who defended it is aware of any opposition. The Jews were strongly possessed with the notion, that no Jew could perish, except through apostacy or idolatry; and that no Gentile could be saved, but by subjecting himself to the institutions and observances of the Mosaic ritual. To counteract this error, the Apostle shews, that the Jews, no less than the Gentiles, stood in need of a Saviour, and must embrace the Gospel, in order to their final salvation. But to this conclusion he comes by gradual, and almost imperceptible, advances; shewing, that God, as a righteous Judge, will deal with all according to their works, without shewing partiality to any on account of their external privileges, or leaving any to suffer on account of their external disadvantages, but awarding equally to all such a sentence, as their respective characters shall require. This is a truth so obvious and incontrovertible, that they could not but acquiesce in it; and,

by

by a due consideration of it, they would be prepared to embrace all that the Apostle was about to advance on the subject which he was especially commissioned to proclaim, the admission of all, both Jews and Gentiles, on an equal footing into the Church of Christ.

But, in stating the rule which God would observe in the future judgment, the Apostle designed further to convey the most important information to the whole world: for, as all must one day stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, it is of infinite importance for all to know on what grounds their eternal state will be determined.

To leave no doubt on this subject, he fully states,

I. The character and end of the godly—

Mark,

1. Their character—

[The godly man is known by *the object* he pursues. Nothing less than "glory and honour and immortality" will satisfy him: not the glory and honour which pertain to this life; not the immortality which consists in posthumous fame: those he leaves for others: his ambition soars to higher things; to things worthy of an immortal soul; even to the everlasting possession of all the glory and felicity of heaven. This is the prize which he sees held out to him in the Scriptures: and for the attainment of it he strains every nerve. He well knows how richly it will recompense all his labours and toils; and every thing in comparison of it is regarded by him as the small dust upon the balance.

He is further known by *the means he uses to attain it:* he seeks it "by a patient continuance in well doing." Whatever he believes to be the will of God, he does. Has God commanded him to humble himself as a sinner, and to flee to Christ as to the refuge that is set before him? he does it; he does it heartily; he does it humbly; he does it continually. Has God further ordered him "no longer to live unto himself, but unto Him that died for him and rose again?" he endeavours to consecrate all his faculties and all his powers to the service of his adorable Redeemer. He is not satisfied with doing such good works as the men of this world are wont to perform; his efforts extend to all the most difficult and self-denying duties, as well those which are loaded with opprobrium, as those which elevate us in the good opinion of mankind——And this he does with "a patient continuance,"

ance," prosecuting, like the sun in the firmament, his destined course, and causing all who behold his light, to glorify God in his behalf. There are times indeed when the difficulties and discouragements which he meets with oppress his mind: his hands sometimes hang down, and his feeble knees seem as if they would no longer sustain the weight they have to bear. But he looks up to God for help: he obtains fresh supplies of grace and strength from above; and, with vigour renewed like the eagles, he resumes his course, determined never to stop, till he has obtained the prize.

In accomplishing the work assigned him, he finds also opposition from without. Much as the ungodly world profess to honour good works, they do not like such works as Christ performed, or such as all his faithful followers perform: they do all they can to obstruct the Christian's path; and if he will proceed in it, they will revile and persecute him, even as they did the Lord of Glory himself. But he "endures hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," and "counts not his life dear to him, if only he may be enabled to finish his course with joy," and to complete the work which God has given him to do.]

2. Their end—

[God never suffers his faithful servants to be disappointed of their hope. Do they seek "eternal life" as their one object? "eternal life" shall be theirs: "the glory and honour" which they sought shall be awarded to them, and shall be enjoyed by them in a degree, of which, whilst here, they had no conception. "Peace" also, even a perfect freedom, from all those conflicts which so often troubled them in this world, will be theirs in full and everlasting possession. Whilst they were here, their "peace passed all understanding, and kept their hearts and minds as a in citadel," out of the reach of all their enemies: but in the future world, their reconciliation with God will be so perfect, and their rest in God so complete, that their peace will flow down like a river, with ever-increasing amplitude and abundance to all eternity.]

In perfect contrast with the foregoing are,

II. The character and end of the ungodly—

Their character is the very reverse of that before considered—

[It might be thought that an obedience to the Gospel was not intended to be included in the "well-doing" of the godly: but here the want of it is particularly marked as a leading feature of the ungodly. In fact, "the souls of men can only be purified by obeying the truth through the Spirit[a];" and

[a] 1 Pet. i. 22.

and all who are born again of the Spirit, that is, all the children of God, are so purified. But the ungodly are averse to the truth; they are "contentious, and will not obey it:" and this arises, not from any want of evidence in the truth itself, but from the predominance of some unrighteous principle, towards which they feel a decided preference, and to which they yield a willing subjection. Some, through the pride of their hearts, reject *the principles* of the Gospel; whilst others, through the love of this present evil world, or through the prevalence of unmortified lusts, refuse submission to *its precepts:* the principles are too humiliating; the precepts too difficult and self-denying. It is not necessary that a person, in order to be numbered with the ungodly, should commit such crimes as are reprobated by the world around him: he may be blameless as to his external conduct in the sight of men, and yet be very ungodly in the sight of God: his aversion to "the truth as it is in Jesus" constitutes him a most flagrant sinner before God, and subjects him to God's heaviest displeasure[b].]

Their end will be more awful than either language can express, or heart conceive—

[They dream of being in the favour of God: but they are objects of his "indignation and wrath." They persuade themselves that they shall be happy in the eternal world: but "tribulation and anguish" will be their certain and unalterable portion[bb]. Oh! who can conceive what it is to be "cast into a lake of fire and brimstone," and to "dwell with everlasting burnings?" Alas! what "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth" will there be in those regions to which the ungodly will be for ever consigned! Yes: "to *every* soul that doeth evil," shall this sentence be awarded. "No respect will be shewn to persons" on account of their name, or profession, or rank, or distinctions of any kind. The Jew will have a priority to the Gentiles, both in respect of happiness and misery; of happiness, inasmuch as his peculiar privileges afford him greater advantages for the attainment of holiness; though the Gentile shall not be overlooked on account of his want of those advantages. In like manner, the Jew will have a fearful precedence also in respect to punishment, on account of the advantages he has abused: but the Gentiles will according to their measure be punished also, if they have not walked agreeably to the light which they have enjoyed[c]. The possession of privileges will prove a blessing, or a curse, according to the use that has been made of them; but the want of privileges shall neither excuse deliberate wickedness, on the one hand, nor prevent the acceptance of willing, though imperfect,

[b] 2 Thess. i. 8. & 1 Pet. iv. 17.

[bb] Compare Ps. lxxviii. 49. with Ps. xi. 6. [c] Luke xii. 47, 48.

perfect, services, on the other hand. If God, on the one hand, will "take vengeance on them that know him not," he has, on the other hand, declared, that "in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, shall be accepted of him."]

From this subject then we may LEARN,

1. What the Gospel is—.

[Many imagine that such declarations as those in our text are altogether *legal*. But the apostle Paul, who surely understood the Gospel, considered these declarations as an essential part of it: and it is worthy of notice, that, in the very epistle where he has most strongly advanced the doctrines of predestination and election, he has brought forward these truths, which are so often set in opposition to them. But the Gospel is not such a partial system as is generally imagined: it neither consists exclusively in those doctrines which are commonly spoken of under the term Calvinism, nor in those which are supposed to have, what is called, an Arminian aspect. The Gospel exhibits the Deity to us under different views; first, as *a merciful Father*, who offers salvation to us through the blood and righteousness of his only-begotten Son; next, as *an almighty Sovereign*, who dispenses his blessings according to his own will and pleasure; and lastly, as *a righteous Judge*, who will proceed with perfect equity in assigning to every man his proper portion of happiness or misery, according to what he has done in the body, whether it be good or evil. Under all these characters God must be viewed: if any one be excluded, his Gospel is mutilated, and his glory obscured. Let us then be equally ready to view him under any of these characters. Let us look to him for a full salvation through the death of his Son: if made partakers of that salvation, let us give all the glory to his free grace, and his electing love: and then let us walk before him in a conscientious performance of every duty, under a firm expectation, that our final sentence shall be according to the dictates of perfect equity. This is to be in the spirit of the Gospel; and if any restrict it to more partial views, they only betray their ignorance or pride, and will find themselves awfully mistaken in the last day.]

2. How to estimate our own character—

[The persons who have such an exclusive fondness of the deeper doctrines of predestination and election, are ready to pour contempt on *evidences*, as though an inquiry into the evidences of our conversion were mere legality. A favourite notion with them is, *that faith is the* ONLY *evidence of faith*. But this is a grievous error. That faith does carry its own evidence along with it, just as love, or any other grace does,

we

we readily allow. A person who relies simply and entirely on God, has a consciousness that he does so, and may, *if this consciousness be confirmed by other evidence*, be assured that his faith is genuine. But men may have a full persuasion in their own minds that they are right, and yet may be under a fatal delusion. This was the case with Paul, whilst he persecuted the Church of Christ: he "*verily thought* that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." The Scriptures furnish us with unnumbered marks whereby to judge of our state. The Epistles of St. John are full of them[d]; and our blessed Lord cautions us strongly against that presumptuous confidence that would exclude an appeal to them[e]: he bids us judge of ourselves by the fruits that we produce[f]; and assures us, that in this way only can we guard against final disappointment and everlasting ruin[g]. To all then would we say, Examine whether you are proceeding in "a patient continuance in well-doing:" for the Judge himself will assuredly at the last day institute a strict inquiry into your works, and determine your state according to them[h]: and "whatever you have sown, that, and that only, shall you reap" to all eternity[i]."]

3. How to secure the prize that is set before you—

[Not only is this plainly told us in our text; but St. Paul elsewhere says expressly, "Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not[k]." St. John also inculcates the same salutary lesson, (as our Lord also does in the parable of the Sower[l],) both, in effect, saying, Look to yourselves, that ye lose not those things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward[m]. That we must live altogether by faith in the Son of God, is certain; for it is from his fulness alone that we can receive any spiritual blessing: but still we must exert ourselves as much, as if salvation were the fruit and recompence of our own efforts alone. This matter is put in a just light by St. Paul, when he says, "Let us cast away every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us *run with patience* the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus*, the author and finisher of our faith[n]." In humble dependence on him to assist our efforts, and in an entire reliance on his meritorious sacrifice as the only ground of our acceptance, we must press forward in our heavenly course: then may we with confidence expect "a recompence of reward," not indeed for any merit in our services, but in exact

[d] See 1 John iii. 10, 14, 19, 20, 21, 24. [e] Matt. vii. 21—23.
[f] Matt. vii. 16—20. [g] ib. ver. 24—27.
[h] Matt. xxv. 31—46. [i] Gal. vi. 7, 8. [k] ib. ver. 9.
[l] Luke viii. 15. "*Bring forth fruit with patience.*"
[m] 2 John, ver. 8. [n] Heb. xii. 1, 2.

exact proportion to them. The men of this world may seek for glory and honour, and be disappointed: but no disappointment shall occur to us: "The wicked worketh a deceitful work; but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward[o]."]

[o] Prov. xi. 18.

DCCCCVII.

INCONSISTENT CHRISTIANS REMONSTRATED WITH.

Rom. ii. 17—23. *Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest A man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest A man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?*

IT is generally acknowledged, that the heart of man is deceitful: but the extent of its deceitfulness is very little known. It is not in things of minor importance only that its delusive operations are felt, but in things of everlasting concern, where, it might be supposed, we should be most on our guard against them. It deceives us in things relating to God, who, however we may deceive ourselves, can never be deceived by us: it leads us to substitute a profession of religion for the actual experience of it in our souls; and to rest in a form of godliness, whilst we are wholly inattentive to its power. This species of self-deceit obtained to an awful degree amongst the Jews, with whom St. Paul expostulates on account of it in a way of keen remonstrance. They could not be persuaded that they were in any danger, because they were descended from Abraham; but St. Paul shews them, that their descent from him would avail them nothing, whilst their conduct was so contrary to their professions; but that rather their hypocrisy proved them

them to be as much in need of a Saviour, as the most ignorant of the Gentile world could be.

Such being the general scope of the passage, we will consider more particularly,

I. The remonstrance itself—

Certainly the state of the Jews called for severe reproof—

[*They were highly privileged beyond the rest of mankind.*—They had a revelation from heaven, whereby they were instructed in the mind and will of God[a], and enabled both to "discern things that differed." and to "approve the things that were more excellent[b]." Moreover, as God's peculiar people, they could call Jehovah *their* God.

But these privileges they grievously abused.—We condemn not their "resting in the law," or their "making their boast of God," provided they had really endeavoured to serve God acceptably, and to yield a willing obedience to his law: but it was the external privilege that they gloried in, and not the spiritual advantages derived from it: they were proud of the distinction, but not desirous of the spiritual benefits connected with it. Because of the superior light they enjoyed, they despised all the rest of the world, as blind, ignorant, benighted: and they assumed to themselves vain glorious titles, as "guides of the blind, lights of those who were in darkness, instructors of the foolish, and teachers of babes:" they had a summary of their duties in a short compendious form, "a form of knowledge and of the truth in the law," by means of which they were enabled to appear very wise to the unenlightened Heathen; but, whilst they thought themselves so highly qualified to "teach others, they taught not themselves:" on the contrary, they were notoriously guilty of those very crimes which they reprobated amongst the Gentile world. They proclaimed with great authority the commandments, "Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery;" but they were as much addicted to these crimes as the Heathen themselves; and though since their return from Babylon they professed an abhorrence of idolatry, and *in that respect* excelled the Heathen, they sacrilegiously robbed God not only of his tithes and offerings, but of all that honour and obedience which they acknowledged to be his due. In a word, by their gross hypocrisy, and their diversified abominations, they caused Jehovah himself to be blasphemed and abhorred amongst the Heathen who were round about them[c].

Of

[a] Deut. iv. 8.

[b] δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα may be translated in either way.

[c] Isai. lii. 5. Ezek. xxxvi. 21—23.

Of what avail could external privileges be to such hypocrites as these?]

Would to God there were not equal cause for reproof to those also who name the name of Christ—

[*Great as were the advantages of the Jews, they were not to be compared with those which are enjoyed by the Christian world.*—We have, not the law only, but the Gospel also, in which are discovered to us all the wonders of redeeming love. And we, in consequence of this distinction, look down with pity on the benighted Heathen, who are bowing down to stocks and stones, and seeking to propitiate their deities by services most painful, most nugatory, most debasing. On the Christian name also we value ourselves, as if that name could save us: and because we have been admitted by baptism into the external bond of the Christian covenant, we conclude ourselves, of course, partakers also of its inward blessings. Ah! fatal delusion! We stand amazed at this error, when exhibited to us by the Jews; but behold it not, when exemplified in ourselves.

But our lives testify against us, as no less hypocritical than the Jews themselves.—Were we really a holy people to the Lord, we might well "make our boast of the Saviour," and "rest in his Gospel" as an undoubted source of everlasting blessedness. But whilst we boast of our superiority to the Heathen in point of light and knowledge, we are on a perfect level with them in our allowed violations of every moral duty. We say to Heathens, "Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery:" but where were ever fornication and adultery practised with more unblushing effrontery, than amongst those who name the name of Christ? Where was dishonesty more universal in every branch of trade, than amongst those who call themselves Christians? Who have ever carried dishonesty to such a pitch as the professed followers of Christ? Who have been men-stealers? Who have stirred up wars from year to year, on purpose to facilitate their projects of enslaving their fellow-creatures? Ah! tell it not in Gath. The very name of Christ stinks in the nostrils of millions, who have been the victims of our rapacity. "Me no Christian," is, in the mind of an African, a severer reproach to us than any other that language can express. And, at this day, there is an anniversary held in the island of Japan for the purpose of trampling on the cross, which the Jesuits of former days have made an object of universal abhorrence.].

Happy should we be, if this reproof were to be confined to merely nominal Christians!

[Amongst religious professors, who have the Gospel

fully and faithfully administered to them, there are many, whose superior light and information serves only to puff them up with false confidence and vain conceit. They look down with affected pity on those whose views of Divine truth are not so clear as their own; whilst yet, in respect of truth, and honour, and integrity, they are far inferior to the persons whom they despise. It is common for such persons to set up for teachers, whilst they themselves need to be taught some of the first and fundamental rules of Christian duty. That professors of religion are too indiscriminately, and too severely, judged, is certain: but it is no less certain, that there is too much reason for complaint given by many, who, under a cloke of religion, veil, or attempt to veil, the grossest hypocrisy. Deceit, and lying, and covetousness, and fraud, and petulance, and idleness, and many other evils, are not unfrequently found predominant features in persons professing godliness; insomuch that the very profession of piety is brought by them into general disrepute, till by a long probation, a man shall have established his character for integrity and truth. The dishonour they reflect on God, and the injury they do to "the Gospel of Christ, which is evil spoken of through them," is more than words can express: but against such persons no remonstrance can be too pointed, no censure can be too severe.]

To view the remonstrance in its true light, we must further consider,

II. The argument confirmed by it—

The general argument is, to convince the Jews of sin: but more particularly it was the Apostle's design to shew,

1. The emptiness of a merely nominal religion—

[The Jews valued themselves on their descent from Abraham, and on their external relation to God as his peculiar people. We in like manner value ourselves on being Christians and Protestants: and we, purely on this ground, entertain as little doubt of our salvation, as the Jews did of theirs. But St. Paul tells the Jews, that the uncircumcised Gentiles, who walked according to the light they enjoyed, would fare better in the eternal world, than the disobedient Jews, notwithstanding all their boasted privileges[d]. And, no doubt, many Heathens are in an incomparably better state than the great mass of the Christians, who in their life and conversation disgrace the truth which they profess. We must go further still, and say, that many, who have walked humbly and conscientiously before God, will, notwithstanding the comparative

[d] ver. 27.

parative darkness of their views, rise up in judgment against those, who, with their clearer views, and more confident professions of faith in Christ, have walked unworthy of their heavenly calling. Yes; many that, according to human estimation, are "last, shall be first; and many that in their own conceit are first, shall be last."]

2. The criminality of an inconsistent profession—

[A profession of love to God and his law only involves us in deeper guilt, if it be not accompanied with a suitable conversation. Much as God hates wickedness in general, there is nothing so odious in his sight as hypocrisy. Against none did our blessed Lord denounce such woes, as against hypocrites; "Woe unto you hypocrites!" and to "take our portion with the hypocrites" is to have the severest lot of all in the eternal world. Think then, ye who call yourselves Christians, what a portion awaits you, if, whilst you name the name of Christ, you depart not from iniquity. Say not, that ye do not make any profession of religion; for your very calling of yourselves Christians, is a public avowal, that Christ is your Redeemer, and your Lord. What if ye were warned that you should be refused the rights of Christian burial? would you deem that no insult? Yet it is only on the presumption that you are Christians indeed, that your bodies are committed to the grave in faith and hope. You do then, and you cannot but, make a profession of faith in Christ, and of obedience to his revealed will: and, if you will not walk as becometh the Gospel of Christ, "your circumcision shall become uncircumcision," your baptism no baptism, and your end terrible, in proportion to the advantages you have abused.

But to a still greater extent is this true respecting those, who, whilst they make their boast of the Gospel, dishonour God by their unholy lives, or unsanctified dispositions. To what purpose are their public professions, or social exercises? To what purpose are all their boasted experiences of alternate elevation and depression, of fear or confidence, of sorrow or of joy? They may profess as they will that they know God; but, if in their conduct they deny him, "they deceive their own souls, and their religion is vain." Extremely awful is that declaration of God to the Church of Smyrna, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the Synagogue of Satan[e]." And it is to be feared, that such Synagogues are yet to be found in our land, under the semblance of Christian Churches and religious Societies. But whatever *they* may think of their professions, God accounts them "blasphemy," and those who make them will be dealt with

[e] Rev. ii. 9.

with by him as hypocrites and blasphemers. We would not speak of this, but with weeping[f]; nevertheless we must declare it, because it is the very truth of God[g].]

3. The universal need of a Saviour—

[All, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin, and therefore need an interest in the Saviour. Yea, the best of men must perish, if they be not washed in the Redeemer's blood. For who is there, that has not occasion to humble himself for his manifold infirmities? Who is there that has acted in all things up to his profession? Who could stand, if God should enter into judgment with him? Yea, "if God should lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet," who could answer him for any one act or thought of his whole life? Know then, that we are all in this respect on a level: we must all "put our hand on our mouth, and our mouth in the dust, crying, Unclean, unclean:" we must all desire with St. Paul to be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ."]

EXHORTATION—

We call on all then, as they value their immortal souls,

1. To embrace the Gospel—

[Do not attempt to substitute any thing of your own in the place of it. Your privileges, your professions, your experiences, your attainments. You must consider them all but as "loss and dung in comparison of Christ." Let it not appear a hard thing to renounce them all in point of dependence; but "submit" willingly and thankfully "to the righteousness of God." It is strange that the acceptance of a free salvation should require any submission at all: but our proud hearts are averse to stoop to such an humiliating way of coming unto God. But be content to have nothing in yourselves, and all in Christ: then shall you be glorified in him, and he in you, to all eternity.]

2. To adorn the Gospel—

[It is no small measure of holiness that becomes those who believe in Christ. They should endeavour "to shine as lights in a dark world[h];" to "walk worthy of their high calling;" yea, "worthy also of him that hath called them to his kingdom and glory." They should seek to be "holy as He is holy," and "perfect as He is perfect." Doubtless those who preach to others should, like the shepherds of old, go before their flocks in every thing that is excellent and praiseworthy:

[f] Phil. iii. 18, 19. [g] Hos. viii. 2, 3. [h] Phil. ii. 15. Matt. vii. 13—16.

worthy: they should be "examples, not to the world only, but to Believers also, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in love, in purity[i]." They should be able to say to others, "Whatsoever ye have seen and heard in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." Would to God that he who now is endeavouring to teach you, may himself learn, and exemplify, these lessons more than he has ever yet done! ——— But the duty of holiness pertains equally to all. O be persuaded to press after the highest attainments in it, and so to make your light shine before men, that all who behold you may be constrained to glorify God in your behalf.]

[i] 1 Tim. iv. 12.

DCCCCVIII.

CHRISTIANS' ADVANTAGES ABOVE HEATHENS.

Rom. iii. 1, 2. *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way.*

IT is not easy to form a just estimate of the privileges attached to the profession of Christianity: we are ready either, on the one hand, to rate them too high, or, on the other, to undervalue and despise them. The Jews laid so great a stress on their relation to Abraham, that they could scarce conceive it possible for them to perish: they concluded, that because they bore in their flesh the external seal of God's covenant, they must of necessity be partakers of its spiritual blessings: and when St. Paul shewed them their error, they indignantly replied, "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" Thus many amongst ourselves are apt to imagine, that their having been admitted by baptism into the Christian covenant will secure them an admission into heaven: and, when they are warned against this sad delusion, they are ready to say, that the Heathen are in a happier state than they. In opposition to this, we propose to shew,

I. What advantages we, as Christians, have above the Heathen—

The Apostle intimates, that the Jews, merely as Jews, possessed "every way much" advantage above the

the Heathen: but, instead of descending to particulars, he contents himself with specifying one, which, as it was the greatest, so in fact it included all the rest, namely, that "to them were committed the Oracles of God." What he has stated thus comprehensively, we shall enter into more minutely.

We say then, that, as Christians, we have many things to which the Heathen are utter strangers: we have,

1. A guide for our faith—

[The Oracles which the Heathen consulted, were altogether unworthy of credit. Their answers were purposely given with such ambiguity, that they might appear to correspond with the event, whatever the event might be*. But our Oracles have no such subterfuges: nor can we possibly err in giving to them the most implicit confidence. They declare to us the nature and perfections of God—the way which he has appointed for our reconciliation with him—the eternal state of those who shall embrace his proffered mercy, and of those who shall reject it. Of these things the Heathen were wholly ignorant; nor could their Oracles afford them any instruction on which they could rely.

What an amazing advantage then has the meanest Christian above the greatest of the Heathen Philosophers! The little volume which he has in his hand, sets before him innumerable truths, which reason never could explore: it reveals them to him so plainly, that he who runs may read and understand them: and, instead of deceiving him to his ruin, it will "make him wise unto everlasting salvation."]

2. A warrant for his hope—

[The Oracles which could declare nothing with certainty, could afford to their votaries no solid ground of hope. But the Christian who believes the Oracles of God, has an "anchor for

* A famous instance of this is mentioned by Herodotus, B. i.—Cyropædia, B. vii. Crœsus, king of Lydia, inquired of his gods, Whether he should make war against Cyrus? The Oracles answered, That he was then only to think himself in danger, when a mule should reign over the Medes; and that, on his passing over the river Halys, he should destroy a powerful kingdom. Relying on these answers as predicting success, he commenced the war, which speedily terminated in the ruin of himself and his whole kingdom: and when he complained that he had been deceived by the Oracles, he was told, That Cyrus was that mule; (being a Persian by his father's side, and a Mede by his mother's:) and that the kingdom which he was to destroy, was his own. See the account given in *Prideaux' Connection of the Old and New Testament History.*

for his soul so sure and stedfast," that not all the storms or tempests which either men or devils can raise, shall ever drive him from the station where he is moored. Suppose his discouragements to be as great as the most gloomy imagination can paint them; he has reasons in plenty to assign for his hope. The sovereignty of God—the sufficiency of Christ—the freeness and extent of the promises—the immutability of Jehovah, who has confirmed his promises with an oath—these, and many other things which are revealed in the Sacred Volume, may enable the person who relies upon them to go to the very throne of God himself, and to plead for acceptance with him: and, in proportion as he relies upon them, he has within his own bosom a pledge that he shall never be ashamed.

What an advantage is this to the man that is hoping for eternal happiness! Surely "blessed are the eyes which see the things that we see, and hear the things which we hear."]

3. A rule for his conduct—

[The wise men of antiquity could not so much as devise what constituted the chief good of man; much less could they invent rules which should be universally applicable for the direction of their followers: and the rules which they did prescribe, were in many respects subversive both of individual and public happiness. But the Oracles of God are proper to direct us in every particular. We may indeed in some more intricate cases err in the application of them, (else we should be infallible; which is not the lot of man upon earth;) but in all important points the path we are to follow is made as clear to us as the racer's course: yea, the word is not only a general "light to our feet, but a lantern to our steps:" so that what was obscure at a distance, is discovered to us on our nearer approach, and a direction is given us, "This is the way; walk ye in it." The whole circle of moral and religious duty is thus accurately drawn. The poor man who is conversant with his Bible, needs not to go to the philosopher, and consult with him; nor need he regard the maxims current in the world. With the Scriptures as his guide, and the Holy Spirit as his instructor, he needs no casuist, but an upright heart; no director, but a mind bent upon doing the will of God. If he derive assistance from any, it is from those only who are more fraught with divine knowledge, and whose superior illumination has qualified them to instruct others. But *they* are no farther to be regarded, than as they speak according to the Written Word.

Compare now the illiterate Christian with the most learned Pagan, and see how greatly he is benefited in this respect also by the light of revelation. If indeed he rest in his admission into the Christian covenant, and look no further than to a mere

mere profession of Christianity, he may easily overrate his privileges: but if he consider them *means to an end*, and improve them in that view, he can never be sufficiently thankful, that he was early received into the bosom of the Church, and initiated by baptism into a profession of Christ's religion.]

Having stated our advantages, we proceed to notice,

II. The improvement we should make of them—

If the possession of the Sacred Oracles constitute our chief advantage, doubtless we should,

1. Study them—

["Search the Scriptures, says our Lord, for in them ye think ye have eternal life.[b] If we neglect the word of God, we lose the very advantage which God in his mercy has vouchsafed to give us, and reduce ourselves, as much as lieth in us, to the state of Heathens. If then we shudder at the thought of reverting to Heathenism, let us, not on some occasions only, like the Heathen, but on all occasions, consult the Oracles, whereby we profess to be directed. "Let our meditation be in them day and night;" and let them be "our delight and our counsellors[b]" — — —]

2. Conform ourselves to them—

[The end of studying the Sacred Oracles is not to obtain a speculative knowledge, but to have our whole souls cast, as it were, into the mould which is formed therein. By them we must regulate both our principles and our practice. We must not presume to dispute against them, because they are not agreeable to our pre-conceived opinions; we must not complain that this is too humiliating, and that is too strict; but must receive with submission all which the Scriptures reveal, believing implicitly whatever they declare, and executing unreservedly whatever they enjoin — — — If we do not thus obey the truth, we shall indeed be in a worse state than the Heathens; our baptism will be no baptism; and the unbaptized Pagans, who walk according to the light they have, will rise up in judgment against us for abusing the privileges which they perhaps would have improved with joy and gratitude[c].]

3. Promote the knowledge of them in the world—

[If God had imparted to us a secret whereby we could heal all manner of diseases; and our own interest, as well as that of others, would be greatly promoted by disclosing it to the whole world; should we not gladly make it known? Shall we then withhold from the Gentile world the advantages we enjoy;

[b] See Deut. vi. 6—9. & Ps. i. 2. & Prov. ii. 1—6.
[c] Rom. ii. 25—27.

enjoy; more especially when God has commanded us to communicate as freely as we have received? Should we not contribute, by pecuniary aid, or by our prayers at least, to send the Gospel to the Heathen, that they may be partakers with us in all the blessings of salvation?

But there are, alas! heathens, baptized heathens, at home also; and to those we should labour to make known the Gospel of Christ. We should bring them under the sound of the Gospel—we should disperse among them books suited to their states and capacities—we should provide instruction for the rising generation—we should especially teach our own children and servants—and labour, "by turning men from darkness unto light, to turn them also from the power of Satan unto God."]

DCCCCIX.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE.

Rom. iv. 1—8. *What shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt: but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

THE mind of man, however open to conviction from the plain deductions of reason, is susceptible of peculiarly strong impressions from that species of argument, which, at the same time that it addresses itself to his intellect, has a tendency to engage his feelings, and to enlist his prejudices in its favour. All the prejudices of the Jews were in favour of Abraham their father, and of David, the greatest of their Monarchs, and one of the most distinguished of their Prophets: and, if the conduct of these two could be adduced as precedents, there would need but little further argument to convince a Jew, that the thing which was so recommended was right. Of this prejudice

judice St. Paul availed himself in the passage before us. He had proved, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the justification of a sinner was, and must be, solely by faith in Christ: he had proved it from the guilty state of all, whether Jews or Gentiles, (which precluded a possibility of their being justified by any works of their own[a];) and from the Lord Jesus Christ having been sent into the world to make an atonement for sin, and thereby to reconcile the demands of justice with the exercise of mercy. He had shewn, that this way of salvation cut off all occasion of boasting, and was equally suited both to Jews and Gentiles; and that, instead of invalidating the law, as at first sight it might appear to do, it did in reality establish the law.

Having thus proved his point *by argument*, he now comes to confirm it *by example;* and he adduces such examples, as the Jews could not but regard as of the highest authority.

We must bear in mind what the point is which he is endeavouring to maintain: it is, That the justification of the soul before God is not by works of any kind, but simply, and solely, by faith in Christ. This he proceeds to prove from the examples,

I. Of Abraham—

What (he asks) did Abraham, the great progenitor of the Jewish nation, find effectual for *his* salvation? This he answers,

1. By an express declaration of Holy Writ—

[The manner in which he appeals to the decision of Scripture is well worthy of notice. "What saith the Scripture?" It matters little, what this or that *man* may say: we must abide by what *God* has spoken. *His* word shall stand, though the whole universe should rise up to contradict it. On *that* therefore we must found our sentiments, and on that alone: if men speak according to his word and testimony, it is well: "if not," whatever may be their pretences to wisdom, "there is no light in them[b]."

Now the Scripture declares, that "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness[c]" ——— In the passages referred to, there were two promises made to him:

[a] Ch. iii. 20. [b] Isai. viii. 20. [c] Gen. xii. 1—3. with xv. 5, 6.

him: the one was, that one particular "seed should be given to him, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed;" and the other was, that a spiritual seed should be given him, who should be "numerous as the stars of heaven." These promises he firmly believed; and so believed them, as actually to repose all his hope and trust in that promised Seed, who was to be the Saviour of the whole world. "This faith of his was counted to him for righteousness;" or, in other words, this Saviour, on whom his faith reposed, was made the source of righteousness and salvation to his soul.

This particular declaration of Holy Writ is referred to by the Apostle a great many times, on account of its singular importance: but, as its importance will more fully appear in the sequel of our discourse, we shall proceed to notice how St. Paul answers his own question.]

2. By arguments founded upon it—

[He justly observes, that, when the Scripture thus represents Abraham as justified by faith, all works are of necessity excluded from any participation in the office of justifying: for, if it be supposed that a man is justified, either in whole or in part, by his works, his reward would come to him as a debt, and not as a gift. However great the distance may be between the work and the reward, it will make no difference with respect to this point: if the work be proposed as the ground of the reward, and be performed in order to merit that reward, then is the reward a debt which may be justly claimed, and cannot with justice be withheld. Moreover, if works be thus admitted as purchasing or procuring the reward, then may the person who performs them have a ground of glorying in himself: he may say with truth, This *I earned;* this *I merited;* this *could not justly have been withheld from me.* But had Abraham any such ground of glorying? No: the Scripture denies that he had, in that it ascribes his salvation, not to any righteousness of his own, but to a righteousness imputed to him, and apprehended by faith only.

But whilst the Apostle argues thus strongly and incontrovertibly on the passage he has cited, we must not overlook the peculiarly forcible language which he uses, and which, if it had not been used by him, *we* should scarcely have dared to use. In declaring who the person is that is thus justified, he tells us, that it is the person "who *worketh not*" (with a view to obtain justification by his works), but believeth on him that justifieth *the ungodly.*" Of course, the Apostle is not to be understood as saying, that the justified person will *continue* "ungodly," or that he will "not work," *after he has been justified;* but only as saying, that he does not work *with a view to obtain* justification, or come *as a godly person* to receive a recompence:

recompence; in coming to the Saviour, he will bring nothing but *his sins* with him, in order that he may be delivered from them, and obtain an interest in the Redeemer's righteousness, in which he may be clothed and stand before God without spot or blemish. But still the terms are such as to mark with the utmost force and precision, that, from the office of justifying, works must be for ever excluded; and that we must, like Abraham, be justified by a righteousness not our own; a righteousness, which cuts off all occasion of glorying, and which makes our salvation to be altogether of grace.]

But, as to the Apostle's arguments several objections may be made, we will endeavour to state and answer them.

1. This statement of Abraham's being justified by faith is directly contradicted by St. James—

[St. James, it is true, does say that Abraham was justified by *his works;* and specifies the offering up of his son Isaac as the work for which he was justified: and farther declares, that in that act the passage quoted by St. Paul received its accomplishment[d]. But here is no opposition between the two Apostles; as the scope of the context in the two passages will clearly evince. St. James is evidently speaking of the difference between a living and a dead faith; and he shews that Abraham clearly proved his to be a living faith, by the fruits it produced[e]. But St. Paul is speaking of the way in which Abraham was justified before God: and the faith whereby Abraham was justified, was actually exercised *forty years before* the time that St. James speaks of[ee]: which we consider as a decisive proof of these two things, namely, That Abraham was justified (in St. Paul's sense of that term) by faith without works; and next, that St. James did not intend to contradict St. Paul, but only to guard his doctrines from abuse.]

2. Though it was not for offering up his son that God justified Abraham, yet it was for another act of obedience, namely, his submitting to circumcision—

[This idea is entertained by many, who oppose the doctrine of justification by faith alone: but it is as erroneous as that before stated: for Abraham had no son at all, when he exercised faith in God's promises, and by that faith was justified before God: and he had waited some years in expectation

[d] Jam. ii. 21—23. [e] ib. ver. 18.

[ee] The faith by which Abraham was justified was exercised twenty years before Isaac was born. See Gen. xv. 5, 6. And we suppose Isaac to have been at least twenty years old when his father offered him up.

tion of the promised seed, before Sarah gave him her servant Hagar to wife[f]: and Ishmael was thirteen years old when God renewed his covenant with Abraham, and enjoined him the use of circumcision: so that, in this, as in the former case, Abraham was *justified many years before* the act took place for which our objector would suppose him to be justified. And this is so important an observation, that St. Paul, in the verses following our text, dwells upon it with all the emphasis imaginable[g] — — — deducing from it a truth which is of infinite importance to us, namely, That, as Abraham was justified in his uncircumcised state, he is as truly the father of us uncircumcised Gentiles, as he is of his lineal descendants, the circumcised Jews.]

3. If we are constrained to acknowledge, as indeed we must, that Abraham was justified by faith without works, yet that was *a personal favour to him* on account of the extraordinary strength of his faith, and *not to be drawn into a precedent for us*—

[But this also is as erroneous as either of the foregoing objections: for though it is certain that he is celebrated above all men for the strength of his faith, and that the exercises of his faith are recorded to his honour, yet it is expressly affirmed by St. Paul, that "it was *not written for Abraham's sake alone*, that faith was imputed to him for righteousness, *but for us also*, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification[h]."]

Having thus considered the example of Abraham, we proceed to notice, that,

II. Of David—

The passage which St. Paul adduces from the Psalms of David, in confirmation of his argument, is peculiarly deserving of our attention[i].

In the words themselves, *we*, if not directed by an inspired Apostle, should not have found any decisive evidence of justification by faith alone—

[There is nothing in it respecting imputation of righteousness, but only of a non-imputation of sin. That non-imputation, or forgiveness of sin, might, for ought that appears in that passage to the contrary, be obtained by works: for there is nothing said about faith in Christ, or indeed about faith at all. Moreover, the words, as they stand in the psalm, and are followed

[f] Gen. xvi. 3. [g] ver. 9—11. with Gen. xvii. 23.
[h] ver. 20—25. [i] Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

followed by what is spoken of a guileless spirit, seem to intimate the very reverse of what St. Paul has deduced from them, namely, That a man, who, *in consideration of his guileless spirit*, has his infirmities forgiven, is a blessed man.]

But St. Paul has, by Divine direction, put a sense upon them which beyond all possibility of doubt determines the question before us—

[He tells us, that David in this passage "describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." Here it is not possible to shut our eyes against the doctrine of imputed righteousness. We do not approve of taking one or two particular expressions, and giving them in our discourses a prominence and importance which they do not hold in the Inspired Volume. But we equally disapprove of keeping out of view any doctrine which is clearly taught in the holy Scriptures: and we must say, that the doctrine of "righteousness imputed to us without works," is more clearly taught here, than if it had been maintained in a long and elaborate course of argument; because it is introduced so incidentally, and because the Apostle goes, if we may so speak, so much out of his way on purpose to introduce it. To introduce it, he represents David as saying, what (*in words*) he did not say; and he omits some very important words which he actually did say. It is observable, that St. Paul stops short in his quotation, and leaves out those words of David, "And in whose spirit there is no guile." And why did he omit them? We apprehend, for this reason. If he had inserted them, he might have been supposed to countenance the idea, that, though we are justified by faith, yet it is not by faith *only*, but by faith either *as connected with* a guileless spirit, or as *productive of* a guileless spirit: whereas we are justified by it, not *as united with holy dispositions*, nor *as an operative principle* in the soul, but *simply and solely as apprehending Christ*, in and through whom we are justified. Thus by a remarkable *addition*, and by a no less remarkable *omission*, he brings the words of David to bear upon his point, and to prove what is of incalculable importance to every soul of man.

We would earnestly wish these words of David to be understood in their full import, as declaring explicitly, that we are to be justified by a righteousness not our own, nor obtained by any works of ours; but by a righteousness imputed to us, and apprehended entirely by faith, even by the righteousness of Christ, which is unto all, and upon all them that believe[k]."]

From

[k] Rom. iii. 22.

From hence then we may SEE, how incontrovertibly the doctrine of justification by faith alone is established; and,

1. How far it is from being a *new* doctrine—

[Wherever this doctrine is preached, a clamour is raised against it, just as it was in the Apostle's days[l], as a "*new* doctrine:" but let any one look into our Articles and Homilies, and see, whether it be not the doctrine of our Church. It is that very doctrine which constituted the basis of the Reformation ——— Then let us go back to the Apostolic age: Can any one read the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, and doubt what St. Paul thought of it? If we go farther back, to David, and to Abraham, we see that they sought salvation in no other way than simply by faith in Christ: and we may go farther still, even to Adam, whose views were precisely the same, and who had no hope but in "the Seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head." There has been but one way of salvation for fallen man from the beginning of the world: nor shall there be any other as long as the world shall stand[m]. If it be *new* in any place, the fault is not in him that preaches it, but in those who have preceded him, who have neglected to preach it. Dismiss then this prejudice; and receive the glad tidings of a Saviour with all the joy and gratitude that the occasion demands.]

2. How far it is from being an *unimportant* doctrine—

[Many who do not reject the doctrine itself, yet consider it as a merely speculative doctrine, a mere strife of words. But our Reformers did not so think it, when they sealed the truth of it with their blood. Nor did St. Paul think it so, when he denounced a curse against any man, yea even against any angel from heaven, that should attempt to establish any doctrine that interfered with it[n]. See how strongly he guards us against any dependence whatever upon our own works, as entirely invalidating the whole Gospel, and destroying utterly all our hope in Christ[o]. It was owing to the aversion which the Jews felt to this doctrine, that so few of them were saved; whilst the Gentiles, who felt less difficulty in submitting to it, were brought in vast multitudes into the kingdom of our Lord[p]. Know then, that this doctrine of justification by faith alone without works, is absolutely necessary to be received, and known, and felt, and gloried in; and that if we build on any other foundation, we must inevitably and eternally perish[q].]

3. How

[l] Acts xvii. 19. [m] Acts iv. 12. [n] Gal. i. 8, 9.
[o] Gal. v. 2—4. [p] Rom. ix. 30—32. [q] 1 Cor. iii. 11.

3. How far it is from being a *discouraging* doctrine—

[Another calumny generally circulated respecting justification by faith, is, that it is an alarming and terrifying doctrine, and calculated not only to bewilder weak persons, but even to deprive them of their senses. But the very reverse of this is true. Doubtless, before that this doctrine can be received aright, a man must be made sensible that he is in a guilty and undone state, and incapable of effecting his own salvation by any works of righteousness which he can do: but when once a person is brought to that state, the doctrine of a full salvation wrought out for him by Christ, and freely offered to him "without money and without price," is replete with consolation: it is marrow and fatness to the soul; "it is meat indeed, and drink indeed." Look at the 3000 on the day of Pentecost, and see the effect of this doctrine upon them[r]. Look at the Ethiopian Eunuch, and at the whole city of Samaria, when Philip had preached it to them[s]; and then you will see the proper tendency of the doctrine, and the sure effect of it wherever it is received. If any works of ours were required to purchase salvation, that doctrine might well drive men to despair: for, it would be like telling the wounded Israelites, when they were in the very article of death, to perform some arduous feats in order to procure their restoration to health; or rather, like telling the dead to raise themselves in order to their enjoyment of life. But the erection of the brazen serpent, that the dying might look unto it and live, is a lively emblem of that salvation which is offered to the world through faith in a crucified Redeemer: and the more pungent is the grief which any feel on account of their guilt and helplessness, the richer is the consolation which will flow into their souls the very instant they believe the glad tidings of the Gospel.]

4. How far it is from being a *licentious* doctrine—

[There is no end to the calumnies raised against this doctrine, and against all who maintain it. The Preachers of it, even those who are most sober, and most guarded, and most practical, are always represented as saying, that, if only men will believe, they may live as they please. But there is nothing more contrary to truth than such a representation as this. We always affirm, that though works are excluded from the office of justifying the soul, they are indispensably necessary to prove the sincerity of our faith; and that the faith which is not productive of good works, is no better than the faith of devils. And then, as to the actual effects which are produced by this doctrine, look back to our Reformers: look back to St. Paul, the great champion of this doctrine: look back

[r] Acts ii. 46, 47. [s] Acts viii. 8, 39.

back to David, and to Abraham, and to all the saints recorded in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews: or if you wish for living examples, look to thousands who maintain and glory in this blessed doctrine. We will appeal to matter of fact: Who are the persons that in every place are spoken of as precise, and righteous over-much, and as making the way to heaven so strait that nobody can walk in it? Are not these the very persons, even these who maintain salvation by faith alone? That there are some who do not adorn this doctrine, is true enough: and so there were in the Apostolic age. But do we not bear our testimony against them, as well as against the self-righteous contemners of the Gospel, yea, with far greater severity than against any other class of sinners whatever? Be it remembered then, that the Gospel is "a doctrine according to godliness; and that "the grace of God which bringeth salvation teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godlily in this present world." And we now declare before all, that they who profess the Gospel in words, and deny it in their works, will have a less tolerable portion in the day of judgment than Tyre and Sidon, or even Sodom and Gomorrah.]

DCCCCX.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH NECESSARY TO THE HONOUR OF GOD, AND THE HAPPINESS OF MAN.

Rom. iv. 16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.*

TO many the doctrines of the Gospel appear mere arbitrary appointments; and justification by works seems as much entitled to our approbation as justification by faith alone. But the doctrines of the Gospel are grounded on absolute and indispensable necessity: we are shut up to them: we have no other ground of hope. After man had fallen, it was not possible that any law should be given him whereby he might regain his lost happiness. If such a law could have been devised, God would have given it in preference to the plan of salvation provided in the Gospel; as St. Paul tells us; "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righte-

ousness should have been by the law[a]." But a Saviour was necessary; and justification by faith in him was necessary, indispensably necessary,

I. For the honour of God—

It is surely meet that God should have the undivided honour of all that he has done—

[He has made the universe for the express purpose of glorifying himself in the works of his hands[b]; and both the celestial and terrestrial bodies reflect upon him the honour due unto his name[c]. In the various dispensations of his providence also God has respect to his own glory, "upholding all things by the word of his power," and ordering all things, even from the rise and fall of empires to the preservation of a sparrow, or the falling of a hair from our head[d].

But, if in the works of creation and providence God have all the glory, shall he not much more have it in the work of redemption? Who first devised that wondrous work? The counsel of peace was between the Father and the Son from all eternity[e]. Who prevailed upon the Father to give his only Son out of his bosom to be our Surety and substitute, and to accept his vicarious sacrifice in our behalf? All this was the result of God's "eternal purpose which he purposed in himself," "according to the counsel of his own will, and to the praise of the glory of his own grace[f]." We may further ask also, How is it that this salvation is imparted to the souls of men? Do men attract his notice first by their own superior merits? or do they of themselves begin to seek his favour? Does not God in every instance prevent them with the blessings of his goodness; and of his own good pleasure give them "both to will and to do[g]?" Now all this exercise of love and mercy is intended by God himself to shew to the whole universe "the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus[h]:" Is he then, or is he not, to have the glory of this work? Is it meet, that, when he gives all, and his creatures receive all, the crown should be taken from his head, and be placed on the head of those, who, but for the superabundance of his grace, must all have perished like the fallen angels? We think that, however prejudiced any may be against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, it is impossible for them not to see that man has no right to invade the prerogative of the Most High, and that "God cannot, consistently with his own honour, give his glory to another[i]."]

But,

[a] Gal iii 21, 22. [b] Rev. iv. 11. [c] Ps. xix. 1.
[d] 1 Sam. ii. 6—8. Isai. xlv. 5—7. [e] Zech. vi. 13. Eph. iii. 9.
[f] Eph. i. 9—12. & iii. 10, 11. [g] Phil. ii. 13.
[h] Eph. ii. 7. [i] Isai. xlii. 8.

But, if man's salvation be in any measure by works, God will not have all the glory of it—

[" Therefore is salvation by faith, *that it may be* by grace." Were it in any measure by works, it would become "*a debt*, and not a reward of grace[k]." Let but the smallest part of our reward be claimed as a debt, and there is an end of God's honour as the sole Author of our salvation. Man will have a right to boast: indeed he cannot but boast: he cannot but say, I paid a price for this benefit: whether the price be equal in value to the benefit conferred, is nothing to the purpose: it was the price demanded; and the man who pays this price may claim the benefit, as having performed the terms on which that benefit was suspended. To suppose that salvation can be of faith and of works at the same time, is absurd: the two are incompatible with each other[l]: " if it be of works, it cannot be of grace;" and " therefore it is of faith, that it may be by grace."]

But justification by faith alone is yet further necessary,

II. For the happiness of man—

If justification were by works, " the promise would be sure" *to none*—

[Consider what must be done to secure the promised benefit: First, such a number of good works must be performed as shall be sufficient to purchase the remission of all our past sins. But who shall ascertain what measure of them shall suffice? or who, if it were ascertained, shall perform them? Next, such a number of good works must be performed as shall suffice to purchase eternal happiness and glory. And who shall tell us the amount of these that is required? or who will undertake to pay the price? Whatever is paid to purchase mercy for other acts, must need no mercy for itself: and how many of such acts can you produce? Nay further; it must be not only a perfect work, but a work of supererogation; for if it be a work that has been enjoined, you are still only " an unprofitable servant; you have done no more than was your duty to do." What store of such works have you wherewith to purchase heaven? But you will say, that God has mitigated the demands of his law, and is now satisfied with imperfect obedience. I ask, Where has he done so? and What is the measure of imperfection which he allows? Can you answer this? Can any human Being answer it? But, for argument sake, you shall fix your own standard; you shall fix it where you please; and you shall be judged by nothing but your own law. Suppose that you have now fixed it; Have you from the beginning

[k] ver. 4. [l] Rom. xi. 6.

beginning observed in all things *your own* law? Have you come up truly and habitually to your own standard? if not, you must be condemned out of your own mouth. Reduce the law to any thing you please, to sincerity, if you choose it; and I then ask, Are you *sincerely* abstaining from *every thing* which you believe to be evil, and doing *every thing* which you believe to be pleasing unto God, from day to day, from month to month, from year to year? Are you willing to found all your hopes of salvation on this? and are you content that all the promises of mercy shall for ever fail you, if in any one instance you ever have been, or ever shall be, defective in your performance of these conditions? Will you look to this method of salvation to "make the promise *sure?*" Alas! there is no man that ever could, or ever can, stand on such a ground as this.]

But justification being by faith alone, the promise is sure *to all*—

[To all who truly believe in Christ, the promise is infallibly sure, whatever be their *nation*, their *character*, their *attainments*, their *circumstances*. The Jew and the Gentile are here perfectly on a level[m]: nothing is conceded on account of circumcision; nothing is withheld on account of uncircumcision: the righteousness of Christ shall be equally, on the one or the other, the very instant they believe in Christ[n]. Nor will it make any difference whether they have been more or less sinful in times past. The blood of Christ is as sufficient to cleanse one, as another: the very man that nailed our Saviour to the cross, or that pierced his side with the spear, may be as effectually delivered from his guilt, as any other sinner in the universe, provided he really and truly look to the Lord Jesus Christ to save him: for "*All* that believe, are justified from *all* things[o]." Moreover, the babes in Christ have the promise as sure to them, as the young men or fathers have. Salvation is not suspended on the *strength* of our faith, but its *reality;* not on *the time that it has been exercised*, but on *the simplicity and sincerity with which it is exercised*. Hence St. John says, "I write unto you, *little children*, because your sins *are* forgiven you for his name's sake[p]." It is not said here, that their sins *shall be* forgiven, when they have attained such an age; but, that they *are* even now already forgiven to them, notwithstanding their infantine weakness and insufficiency. We must go further still, and say, that, though the Believer should be in the very article of death, and have no time left him for the performance of good works, yet should the blood of Christ, sprinkled by faith, cleanse him from all sin; and the righteous-

[m] Rom. iii. 30. [n] ib. ver. 22. [o] Acts, xiii. 39.
[p] 1 John, ii. 12.

righteousness of Christ, apprehended and applied by faith, shall justify him perfectly before God. The penitent thief had reviled our Saviour on the cross, no less than the impenitent one: yet, the very instant he cast himself on the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, he was accepted; and our Lord himself said to him, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The promise being made to all who believe, it is as sure to the Believer, as the power and veracity of God can make it.]

To IMPROVE this subject, we shall,

1. Guard the doctrine from abuse—

[That the doctrine of justification by faith *may be* abused, is certain: for so it was in the days of St. Paul himself[q]. But truth is not therefore to be renounced because it may be perfected; but we must, as Paul himself did, hold fast the truth, and rescue it from those perversions to which it is exposed.

We have stated with all possible plainness, that we are to look for our justification solely by faith, without the smallest dependence on any works of our own. But are we therefore at liberty to neglect good works? or can our final salvation be secured without them, where an opportunity is afforded for the performance of them? Assuredly, *in their place*, good works are as necessary as faith itself: only we must take care not to confound their respective offices. The use of faith is, to apprehend Christ; and the use of good works is, to glorify Christ. In no other way can Christ be apprehended, than by faith; and in no other way can he be glorified, than by good works[r]. Now God has clearly pointed out the way in which his people must walk: and it is only by walking in that way that they can arrive at the mansions prepared for them[s]. It is necessary therefore that we should cultivate all Christian virtues, adding one to another throughout their whole extent: and it is by this course of action that we are to "make our calling and election sure[t]." Here we would particularly remind you, that the very same word which is used by St. Paul in reference to faith, is used by St. Peter in reference to works[u]. And how are we to explain this? Are we to set the two Apostles against each other? No: they are easily reconciled: the one speaking of faith as securing an interest in the promises; and the other speaking of works as the appointed road in which we are to walk, and which alone will lead us safely to the kingdom of heaven. As, on the one hand, without faith we can never be united unto Christ, or be partakers of his righteousness, so, on the other hand, if it produce

[q] Rom. vi. 1, 15. [r] John xv. 8. [s] Eph. i. 4. & ii. 10.
[t] 2 Pet. i. 10, 11. [u] βεβαίαν.

produce not obedience, our faith will be of no more avail than the faith of devils. And this is exactly what St. James tells us[x]; as also does St. Paul in this very Epistle, where he says, that "to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, God will give eternal life[y]." If the Apostle therefore did not contradict himself, neither are we to consider the other Apostles as contradicting him, but only as affirming, that *in their place* good works are necessary, no less than faith is *in its place*. Behold then, whilst we maintain with all stedfastness the doctrine of justification by faith, we declare to all that the King's highway is the way of holiness[z], and that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord[a]."]

2. Commend it to your cordial acceptance—

[If you sought for nothing but present comfort, methinks you should without hesitation embrace the doctrine of salvation by faith. For at what comfort can a man ever arrive, who seeks salvation by his works? How can he ever get satisfaction on the subjects on which all his happiness depends? How can he know what is sufficient for his acceptance, and whether he has done what under his circumstances is sufficient? And, if he can never attain the knowledge of these things, in what sad uncertainty must he be held all his days respecting the final salvation of his soul! And is it not a fearful thing to stand on the brink of eternity, and not to know whether we be going to heaven or hell? The doctrine of justification by faith presents a clear and definite idea to the mind. Doubtless, in the lower stages of the Divine life, there may be considerable suspense even there; because a person may not be certain that his faith is so simple and entire as it ought to be: but still he has a definite object in view, namely, to cast himself wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and to rely altogether upon him: and, though he may not have an assured confidence of his acceptance in Christ, he knows, that it is as impossible for a man who flees to Christ to perish, as it is for God to lie: and this conviction is a source of unbounded consolation to his soul[b]. In this conviction he has "an anchor for his soul, both *sure* and stedfast[c];" an anchor, which shall enable him to ride out in safety all the storms, which either the world or Satan can raise against him.

But present comfort is but a secondary consideration. The question is, What will avail us at the day of judgment? What will secure to us the promise *then*? God has told us, that he

[x] Jam. ii. 14—20. [y] Rom. ii. 7. [z] Isai. xxxv. 8.
[a] Heb. xii. 14. [b] Heb. vi. 17—19.
[c] Here is the same word, βεβαίαν.

he has appointed salvation to be by faith *for this very end.* Will God then, who has declared, that, if we believe not on his Son we are condemned already, and that his wrath abideth on us; will he, I say, reverse his sentence in favour of those who have proudly rejected the salvation which he offered them? This cannot be. Let me therefore intreat all to renounce all dependence on their own works, as Paul did on his[d]; and to seek salvation in that adorable Emmanuel, of whom it is said, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and in him shall they glory[e]."]

[d] Phil. iii. 9. [e] Isai. xlv. 25.

DCCCCXI.

BENEFITS ARISING FROM A JUSTIFYING FAITH.

Rom. v. 1—5. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.*

IT may excite surprise, that the Apostle should contend so earnestly for the doctrine of justification by faith alone, when on many other subjects he evinces a candour that might almost be construed into indifference. The eating of meats offered to idols; the observance of times and seasons which under the Jewish law were regarded as holy; yea, and even the practice of circumcision itself, if not set in opposition to the Gospel; were left by him to the discretion of men, to be used or neglected as they thought fit. But to receive the doctrine of justification by faith was not left to the option of any; nor was any alternative offered them, but to submit to it, or perish. This however was not without good reason, since it was not possible to substitute any thing in the place of that doctrine, or to interfere with it in any degree, without making void the whole work of redemption. Moreover, by this doctrine such blessings were insured to man as could not be procured by any other means. Some of these the Apostle enumerates in the passage before us:

and

and we shall consider them in the order in which they lie—

I. A state of favour and acceptance with God—

[Man, as a sinner, is exposed to the wrath of God, and is under a sentence of actual condemnation. But being justified by faith in Christ, he is freed from guilt through the atoning sacrifice which has been offered for him, and is brought into a state of reconciliation with God. From the moment that he believes in Christ, "the anger of God is turned away from him;" and there remains, if we may so speak, no longer any thing upon him, which can call forth the Divine displeasure against him: his sins are all washed away in the Redeemer's blood; and he is clothed from head to foot in the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, so that in the sight of God he stands without spot or blemish[a]. Having thus perfect reconciliation with God, he has peace in his own conscience, even that "peace of God which passeth all understanding."

Into this state "he has access by faith in Christ;" and in it "he stands," having this peace as an abiding portion. It is the very portion which Christ himself promised to all his faithful followers; "In me ye shall have peace:" "My peace I give unto you." And hence the Lord Jesus bears, as his own peculiar title, that glorious name, "The Prince of Peace[b]."]

Next in succession to this blessing, is,

II. A joyful hope of his glory—

[The Believer, being made a Child of God, is become "an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ[c]:" and he immediately begins to look forward to that inheritance to which he has been begotten, which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and never-fading; and is reserved in heaven for them, as they are reserved by the power of God for it[d]." To this inheritance our blessed Lord encouraged his Disciples to have respect continually, and to anticipate in their minds the everlasting fruition of it: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also[e]." And accordingly we find the apostle Paul sweetly assured of the possession of it, as soon as he should be liberated from this earthly tabernacle[f]; and teaching all to expect the same portion at the period of their dismission

[a] Eph. v. 27. Jude, ver. 24.
[b] Isai. ix. 6.
[c] Rom. viii. 17.
[d] 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.
[e] John xiv. 2, 3.
[f] 2 Cor. v. 1. Phil. i. 21, 23.

dismission from the body[g]. Well may the Believer rejoice in such a hope: for, what are earthly crowns and kingdoms in comparison of those to which he is heir[h]?]

Whilst the Believer receives such great benefits from Christ, he experiences,

III. A delight even in tribulations for his sake—

[Tribulation must of necessity in itself be painful: but, as endured for Christ, they become a source and occasion of joy. The Believer knows beforehand that he shall be called to suffer them[i]; and he is prepared to glory in them, as the Apostles did, who, when they had been imprisoned and scourged for their fidelity to Christ, went forth from their persecutors, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake[k]." They know that their sufferings will be productive of present, no less than of eternal, benefit to their souls; that, though in the first instance tribulation may cause impatience, it will ultimately "work patience," by bringing him to a meek submission to the Divine will: from patience so increased, he will derive "experience," or a decisive evidence that God is with him, and that the grace of God has wrought effectually on his soul. By that experience his "hope" will be exceedingly confirmed; for he will see the very justice, as well as the truth, of God pledged to recompense what is so endured for his name's sake[l]: and this "hope will never make him ashamed," as theirs will, who look for salvation in any other way than through faith in Christ. Thus he will see that "his light and momentary afflictions are in reality working for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory[m]:" and in this view of them he will greatly rejoice; even as Paul did, who took pleasure in his multiplied distresses[n], and counted even the most cruel death for the sake of Christ and his Church as a subject of the most heartfelt congratulation[o]. Instead of repining at his trials, he receives them as a most invaluable gift of God to him for Christ's sake[p], and glorifies God for them as a most precious testimony of his love[q]. His enemies indeed "think not so, neither do they mean so:" nothing is further from their hearts than to advance the work of godliness in the souls of those whom they persecute, and to augment their joy: but this is the real effect of persecution, which, like fire, purifies them from their dross, and causes its victims to leap for joy[r].]

To

[g] 2 Tim. iv. 8. [h] Rev. iii. 21. [i] 1 Thess. iii. 4.
[k] Acts v. 41. [l] 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. [m] 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.
[n] 2 Cor. xii. 10. [o] Phil. ii. 17, 18. [p] Phil. i. 29.
[q] 1 Pet. iv. 12—16. [r] Luke vi. 23. σκιρτήσατε.

To this elevated state of mind the Believer is advanced by,

IV. A sense of his love shed abroad in the heart[a]—

[This is a blessing which, though not to be appreciated or understood by those who have never received it, is yet most assuredly enjoyed by many of God's chosen people. We scarcely know how to describe it, because it consists chiefly in an impression on the mind occasioned by manifestations of God's love to the soul. Nothing is more certain than that Christ will "manifest himself to his people, as he does not unto the world." This he will do by the agency of the Holy Ghost, who will "take of the things that are Christ's, and will shew them unto us." As "a *spirit of adoption*" too, he will give us views of the Father, as our Father in Christ Jesus: he will also "*witness* with our spirits that we are Christ's;" and will be in us as "an *earnest* of our everlasting inheritance;" and will "*seal* us unto the day of redemption." By all these operations on our souls, he will "fill us with joy and peace in believing," yea, with "a joy unspeakable and glorified." This is in reality a foretaste of heaven itself; and, where this is, a man, if he had a thousand lives, would be ready to lay them all down for his Lord and Saviour, accounting nothing dear to him, so that "Christ might but be magnified in him, whether by life or death." How persons have been transported with these manifestations, and been enabled by them to triumph over their most malignant enemies, Ecclesiastical history, yea the history of our own Martyrs, sufficiently informs us. This sense of the Divine presence and

[a] This, as it is usually interpreted, is made to sanction the idea, that a sense of God's love in the soul is of itself a sufficient ground for an assurance, that our hope is truly Scriptural, and shall never be disappointed. But such an idea would lead to the most fatal delusions. A most able and judicious Commentator (Mr. Scott), aware of this danger, endeavours to remove it, by including in "the love of God shed abroad in the heart," all the fruits resulting from it. But an easier, and, in the author's judgment, a better way to get rid of the difficulty, is, to connect this clause of the text with those words in ver. 3, "We glory in tribulations also;" the intermediate parts being taken parenthetically. Then the proper sense of these words may be given to them without any danger, and a beautiful light be thrown on the whole passage: for though the love of God in the heart is not *of itself* a sufficient evidence of the soundness of our hope, it is, beyond every thing in the world, an incentive to despise, or rather to glory in, sufferings for the Lord's sake. We would read it thus: "We glory in tribulations also; knowing, &c. &c.; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, &c."

and love is not indeed at all times equally powerful on the soul: but it is the privilege of all who flee unto the Saviour as their only refuge, and rely upon him as their only hope.]

We would EXHORT you then, Beloved,

1. To hold fast the doctrine of justification by faith only—

[No other doctrine brings such blessings along with it. Hence, they who impugn this doctrine, pour contempt on all these effects of it, as fancies that have no reality, and as the creatures of a heated imagination. But we must discard the Scriptures themselves, if we discard these things from the experience of God's people: and therefore let none deprive you of your hope. Believe in Christ: make *him* "all your salvation, and all your desire." Dismiss with abhorrence every thought that tends to lower him in your estimation, or to rob him of his glory; and to the latest hour of your lives "live altogether by faith in Him, who has loved you, and given himself for you."]

2. To seek the privileges connected with it—

[If any enjoy them not, the fault is utterly their own. Circumstances may interfere to put a difference between one and another, so that persons, equally pious, may not be equally full of peace and joy: and the same persons may sometimes experience a diversity of frames. But, generally speaking, these blessed exercises of mind will be found in men in proportion to the simplicity of their faith, and the entireness of their devotion to God. All the persons in the blessed Trinity are engaged to make you thus blessed. The Father lays his anger by, and speaks peace to your souls. The Lord Jesus Christ, as your Advocate with the Father, secures these blessings for you, and, as your living Head, imparts them to you. And the Holy Ghost communicates to you all those exquisite delights, which the sense of God's love, and a prospect of his glory, are calculated to inspire. Seek then the peace that passeth all understanding; and the joyful "hope that purifieth the heart:" and seek such an abiding sense of God's presence, as shall raise you above all the things of time and sense, and convert tribulation itself into a source of joy and a ground of glorying. Then will you adorn this doctrine of God our Saviour; and will put to shame the enemies of the Gospel, by the transcendent efficacy of it upon your souls.]

DCCCCXII.

THE BELIEVER'S SECURITY IN CHRIST.

Rom. v. 6—10. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him: for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

IT is pleasing to see with what delight the apostle Paul dwells upon the transcendent excellency and unbounded love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever he is insisting on, he is sure to introduce the Saviour's name; and, when once he has introduced it, he scarcely knows when to leave the heart-reviving topic; and, if he have left it for a moment, he is ever eager to recur to it again. Hence the connexion of his sentences is frequently remote; as we apprehend it to be in the instance before us. We conceive that the proper connexion of our text is with the two first verses of the chapter; in which the Apostle has spoken of Christ as the true and only source of our acceptance with God, and of that hope of the glory of God, which animates our souls. Then, after expatiating on the further benefits which we receive through him, he comes to state more explicitly, How it was that Christ procured these blessings for us; and Why we may be assured of the ultimate possession of them. In this view of the text we shall be led to shew,

I. What Christ has done for us, as enemies—

Our state by nature is here but too justly described—

[We are "ungodly," we are "sinners," "enemies" to God and all vital religion: at the same time, we are also "without strength," altogether impotent to that which is good——— What a description is this! how humiliating! and yet how just!———]

Yet,

Yet, when we were in this state, did the Lord Jesus Christ undertake our cause—

[He assumed our nature, and in that nature died. Nor was it merely *for our benefit* that he died, but *in our place and stead*. "He bear our sins in his own body on the tree," and suffered, "he, the Just, for us the unjust[a]." We were exposed to the wrath of God; and that wrath he bore for us: "He became *a curse* for us[b]." The cup which we must have been drinking to all eternity, he drank to the very dregs———]

What a stupendous exercise of love was this!

[Well may it be said, that God, in this act of mercy, "*commendeth* his love towards us:" for it is indeed such a display of love as finds no parallel in the whole universe. There could scarcely be found on earth, one person, who would consent to die in the place of another, who was confessedly "a righteous man," and just in all his dealings: though possibly there might be some who would lay down their lives for "a good man[c]," who was eminently pious and useful in the world[d]. But who ever made such a sacrifice for his enemy? The utmost stretch of human affection is, "to lay down one's life for *a friend*[e]." But such was not the love of Christ: "while we were yet *sinners* and *enemies*, He died for us[f]." Truly this was "a love that passeth knowledge;" a love, the heights and depths whereof can never be explored[g]———]

From this love of Christ to his enemies the Apostle takes occasion to declare,

II. What we may expect from him, as friends—

Nothing can be plainer or more conclusive than the Apostle's argument, that, 'if Christ has already done so much for us under circumstances so unfavourable, *much more* shall whatever remains to be done for us, now that we are in a state of friendship with him, assuredly be completed in due season.'

To

[a] 1 Pet. ii. 24. & iii. 18. This may be illustrated by the substitution of the ram in the place of Isaac: Gen. xxii. 13.

[b] Gal. iii. 13.

[c] For this import of the term ἀγαθὸς, see Mark x. 18.

[d] See Rom. xvi. 4. [e] John xv. 13.

[f] How different was this from all that ever occurred on earth, either before or since! If one man has ever died for another, it has been from the consideration of his being either *peculiarly excellent in himself*, or *a great Benefactor to others*, or from a very *high degree of friendship* for him: but when Christ died for us, we, so far from having any thing to recommend us to him, were ungodly in ourselves, and enemies to him. [g] Eph. iii. 18, 19.

To elucidate the force of this argument, we would call your attention to the following positions. If Christ should now abandon the work in which he has proceeded so far, and should leave his people to perish at last,

1. He would defeat all his Father's counsels—

[The Father from all eternity predestinated unto life a number of the human race, who therefore are called, "A remnant according to the election of grace[h]:" and these he *gave* unto his Son[i]; that he might redeem them by his blood, and have them as "his portion for ever and ever[k]." These in due time he calls by his word and Spirit; he adopts them into his family, transforms them into his image, and will finally exalt them to a participation of his glory[l]. That this counsel may be carried into effect, he commits them to his Son, that they may be kept by his power and grace, and "be preserved blameless unto his heavenly kingdom. But if Christ should relinquish his care of them, and leave them ultimately to die in their sins, all these counsels would be defeated; and with respect to those who were so deserted, it would be said, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified," them he *left to perish*[m]. But shall God's purposes be so frustrated? Shall this golden chain, which reaches from eternity to eternity, be so broken? No: "Of those whom his Father gave him, he never did lose any, nor ever will[n]." We say not that he will save them *in* their sins: God forbid, that such a blasphemous idea should enter into the mind of any: but *from* their sins he will save them[o]; and "through sanctification of the Spirit[p]," "he will keep them from falling, and present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy[q]."]

2. He would render void all that he himself had done—

[He has given up his own life a ransom for us, and has actually reconciled us to God by his own obedience unto death. Can we conceive, that, after he has done all this, he should become indifferent to those whom he has thus redeemed? Will he be satisfied thus to shed his blood in vain? If he has "bought us with a price," will he be content to lose what he has so dearly purchased? After he has actually "justified us by his blood," will he leave us to be condemned? Will he, now

[h] Eph. i. 4, 5, 11. 2 Thess. ii. 13. Rom. ii. 5.
[i] John xvii. 2, 6, 9, 11, 24. [k] Isai. liii. 10.
[l] See the 17th Article. [m] Rom. viii. 28—30. [n] John xvii. 12.
[o] Matt. i. 21. [p] 1 Pet. i. 2. [q] Jude 24.

now that nothing is wanting on his part, but to supply us with his grace, and to uphold us in his arms, will he, I say, relax his care of us, and leave us to perish? Having done the greater for us, when enemies, will he forbear to do the less for us, as friends? Having done the greater unsolicited, will he refuse to do the less when intreated night and day? In the days of his flesh, notwithstanding all the obstacles in his way, he ceased not to go forward till he could say, "It is finished." And will he now leave his work unfinished? Having been "the Author of faith" to us, will he decline to be "the Finisher[r]?" Justly does David argue, like the Apostle in our text: "Thou hast delivered my soul from death; wilt not thou then deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living[s]?" In like manner, we also may be "confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ[t]." Our great "Zerubbabel hath laid the foundation of his house; and his hands will finish it[u]."]

3. He would forget all the ends of his own exaltation—

[He is "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour[x], and to "put under his feet all his own, and his people's enemies[y]:" and do we suppose that he will neglect this work? After "having spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them openly upon the cross[z]," will he, now that he is invested "with all power in heaven and on earth" on purpose to complete his triumphs, give up the palm of victory, and suffer Satan to rescue from his hands those, whom with such stupendous efforts he has delivered? It is not as a private person that Jesus has ascended, but as the "Forerunner" of his people[a]. Will he then forget those whom he has left behind? Will the Head be unmindful of his members[b]? And shall the first-fruits be waved, and no harvest follow[c]? "Living, as he does, on purpose to make intercession for us," will he forget to intercede[d]? and having all fulness treasured up in him for his Church[e], will he forget to impart of it to those for whom he has expressly received it[f]? As our High Priest, he must not only enter with his own blood within the veil, and there make continual intercession for us, but must come forth to bless his people[g]: and having fulfilled his office thus far, will he now abandon it? The Apostle had certainly no such apprehension, when he laid so great a stress on the resurrection of our Lord, as to make it more efficacious for the salvation

[r] Heb. xii. 2. [s] Ps. lvi. 13. [t] Phil. i. 6.
[u] Zech. iv. 9. [x] Acts v. 31. [y] 1 Cor. xv. 25.
[z] Col. ii. 15. [a] Heb. vi. 20. [b] Eph. ii. 22, 23.
[c] 1 Cor. xv. 20, with Lev. xxiii. 10, 11. [d] Heb. vii. 25.
[e] Col. i. 19. [f] Ps. lxviii. 18. [g] Deut. x. 8.

tion of men, than even the whole of Christ's obedience unto death[h]. We may be sure therefore, that as he, in his risen state, "is *able* to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him," so he *will* do it, and "will bring Satan himself shortly under their feet[i]."]

4. He would falsify all his own great and precious promises—

[How express is that promise which he has made to all his sheep, that "none shall ever pluck them out of his hands[k]!" Will he be unmindful of this? or is he become so weak that he is not able to fulfil it? He said to his Disciples, "Ye have not chosen me; but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that *your fruit should remain*[l]:" but how can this be true, if he suffer them to become barren, and to be cut down at last as cumberers of the ground? Why did he say, "Believe in God; believe also in me," if he meant, after all, to disappoint our confidence? Can we conceive, that, after comforting his Disciples with the assurance, that he was "going to prepare mansions in his Father's house for them, and would come again and receive them to himself[m];" can we conceive, I say, that he should leave them to take up their abode in the regions of everlasting darkness and despair? No: he is "the Amen, the true and faithful Witness;" and "every promise that is made to us in him, is yea and Amen," as immutable as God himself.[n]]

ADDRESS,

1. Those who are inquiring after the way of salvation—

[Nothing can be more plain than the way of salvation, as it is marked out in our text. How must we "be reconciled to God? Through the death of his Son." How must we be justified and saved from wrath? We must "be justified by his blood," and "saved from wrath through him." How, after having been reconciled to God by the death of Christ, must we finally attain complete salvation? We must be "saved by his life;" that is, we must from first to last live by faith on the Son of God, looking to his death as the meritorious ground of our acceptance, and to his renewed life in heaven as the one source of all our stability, and the surest pledge of our eternal happiness. But, it may be asked, Am I among the number for whom these blessings were purchased? If you are among the number of those who feel themselves "ungodly, and sinners, and enemies to God, and without strength," then are you the persons for whom Christ died, and for

[h] Rom. viii. 34. [i] Rom. xvi. 20. [k] John x. 27—30.
[l] John xv. 16. [m] John xiv. 2, 3. [n] 2 Cor. i. 20.

for whom he is improving every moment of his renewed life. What, I would ask, can be more plain than this? What room is here left for doubt? Verily, if salvation be not altogether by Christ Jesus, that is, by the efficacy of his death, and the operation of his grace, St. Paul must have been the most incautious and erroneous writer that ever lived. But, if he was neither ignorant nor deceitful, then is the way of salvation so plain, that not any poor "way-faring man, even though he be a fool, can err therein." We charge you then, Brethren, to flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you; and to "determine to know nothing as a ground of hope, but Jesus Christ and him crucified."]

2. Those who, having sought for reconciliation through Christ, are afraid of being cast off, and left to perish—

[What is it that fills you with such fears as these? Is it on account of Christ that you are distressed? or on account of your own weakness and unworthiness? If you are afraid of Christ, what is it in Him that you stand in doubt of; his power, or his willingness to save? Surely there can be no doubt on either of these points. If your fears arise from a view of your own weakness and sinfulness, why should *that* prove a bar to your acceptance with him, which was, I had almost said, a reason for his dying for you, and which constantly calls forth his compassion towards you? True, if you continue ungodly, you have no hope: for "the unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God." But, if you desire truly to be delivered from all your corruptions, and to receive constant supplies of grace from him, then you may safely trust in him to carry on and perfect the work he has begun. He that first *sought you*, will not be *sought by you* in vain. He that bore your sins in his own body, will carry them all away into the land of oblivion. He that reconciled you to God, will maintain your peace with God: and he that has completed every thing as far as it depended on his death, will *much more* perfect what depends upon his life. Be strong then, and of good courage; and hold fast your confidence, and the rejoicing of your hope, firm unto the end.]

DCCCCXIII.

HAPPINESS OF THE MORE-ADVANCED BELIEVER.

Rom. v. 11. *And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

THOSE remarkable words of the Prophet, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have

entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," are usually interpreted in reference to the future world: but St. Paul speaks of them as fulfilled to us under the Christian dispensation: for having cited them, he adds, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit[a]." So great are the privileges and blessings which we enjoy under the Christian covenant, that no words can adequately express them, no imagination can fully conceive them. We may say respecting them, what God said to Ezekiel respecting the abominations practised by Israel in the chambers of imagery, that the oftener we search into them, the more and greater we shall find[b]. Truly, "the riches of Christ are unsearchable[c]." This is strongly intimated by St. Paul in the passage before us. He had expatiated on the blessings which we enjoy in, and by, Christ: "We have peace with God" by him; and through him are enabled to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Nay more, we are enabled to "glory in tribulations also," as the appointed means of perfecting the Divine work within us, and of fitting us for the glory which God has taught us to expect[d]. But neither is this all: for God would have us rise above the mere consideration of our own happiness, even though it consist in a possession of all the glory of heaven; and he would have our minds occupied with the contemplation of his infinite perfections, and "filled with all the fulness" of his communicable felicity[e]. Hence the Apostle, declaring this to be the actual experience of the great body of the Church at Rome, says, "And not only so," (that is, we not only enjoy the fore-mentioned blessings,) "but we also joy in God himself through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

In discoursing on these words, we shall be led to shew,

I. The happy state of Believers in general—

The

[a] Isai. lxiv. 4. with 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. [b] Ezek. viii. 3—16.
[c] Eph. iii. 8. [d] ver. 1—3. [e] Eph. iii. 19.

The Believer has now already received reconciliation with God—

[The word translated "The atonement" is the same with that which twice in the preceding verse is translated "Reconciled:" and *that* is its true import here. Reconciliation has been purchased for men by Christ's obedience unto death: and it is freely offered to them in the name of Christ, by those who go forth as his Ambassadors to a guilty world: and it is accepted by those who believe their testimony, and embrace the proffered salvation. It is on this account that the Gospel is called, "The ministry of reconciliation [ee]." Those who receive the glad tidings have all their iniquities blotted out from the book of God's remembrance. He is no more angry with them, as he was in their unbelieving state; but looks upon them as dear children, in whose happiness he will be eternally glorified. They are now privileged to regard him no longer as an angry Judge, but as a loving Father. Their state is precisely that of the Prodigal Son, after he had returned to his Father's house: they are freely forgiven for Christ's sake; nor shall so much as one upbraiding word be ever uttered against them. Their Father rejoices over them as restored to his favour, and delights to honour them with all suitable expressions of paternal love. Are not these persons truly blessed [f]?]

This is the state of every Believer without exception—

[If a man have lived in sin for ever so many years, and have at last been led, with deep penitence and contrition, to the foot of the cross, this mercy is instantly vouchsafed to him. The long-continuance of his former iniquities is no bar to his acceptance. The very first moment that he comes weary and heavy-laden to Christ, he finds rest unto his soul.

Neither does the enormity of a man's transgressions make any difference in this respect. He may have been as vile as ever David was; and yet, on coming truly to Christ, his iniquities shall all be pardoned, and it shall be said to him, "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." "Though his sins may have been as crimson, they shall instantly become as white as snow [g]." The healing virtue of the brazen serpent was not felt by those only whose wounds were of a less dangerous nature, but by those who were at the very point of death: and so shall a sight of our crucified Redeemer operate, however long the wounds of sin have been inflicted, or to whatever extent they may have brought death upon the soul.

We may add also, for the encouragement of the young, that, however weakly their infantine minds have embraced the

[ee] Deut. xxxiii. 26—29. [f] 2 Cor. v. 18—20. [g] Isai. i. 18.

the truth, yet, if they be really sensible of their lost estate, and truly look to the Lord Jesus Christ as their only hope, he will "take them up in his arms and bless them," and will "ordain praise for himself even in the mouth of babes and sucklings."]

But the more immediate object of our text is, to set before us,

II. The yet happier state of the more advanced Believer—

Every Believer without exception "receives reconciliation with God: but the advanced Believer is yet more highly privileged. He has this blessing in common with others; but "*not only so.*" No: he rises higher; he soars even to God himself; and "rejoices" and "glories in" God[h],

1. As a God of all grace—

[The more we are advanced in the Divine life, the more deeply do we feel our own emptiness and utter helplessness. This, we might suppose, would rather weaken and interrupt his joy: and so it would, if his views of God were not also proportionably enlarged. But he views God as "a God of all grace[i]," and whatever grace he more particularly needs, he sees a fulness of it treasured up in his reconciled God for the supply of his necessities. Does he desire peace? God is to him "the God of peace[k]." Would he abound in hope? God is to him "the God of hope[l]." Would he have an increase of patience and of consolation to support him under his diversified afflictions? God is to him "a God of patience and consolation[m]." In short, whatever he want, God is a God of it to him, not only as having an inexhaustible fulness of it in himself, but as, if we may so speak, made up of it, as if it were his one only perfection. What a joyful thought is this to the Believer who is accustomed to seek his all in God, and to "live altogether by faith in the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him!"]

2. As his covenant God and Father—

[God, in the new covenant which he has made with us, has stated this as an inseparable provision of that covenant, that he will be "*the* God *of* his people," and "*a* God *to* them[n]." Whatever he *is*, he will be for them: whatever he *has*, he will, as far as they are capable of receiving it, impart unto

[h] It is the same word as is used in v. 3.
[i] 1 Pet. v. 10.
[k] Heb. xiii. 20.
[l] Rom xv. 13.
[m] Rom. xv. 5.
[n] Jer. xxxi. 33. with Heb. viii. 8.

unto them. He will not merely be a Friend, or a Father, to them: no; he will be *a God:* and all that a God can *be to* them, or can *do for* them, he will *be*, and do. All this he pledges to them by covenant, and by oath; "that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for him to lie, *they* might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them[o]." Well then may they who have laid hold on this covenant, rejoice in him. The Jews, on account of their external relation to him, "made their boast of God[p]:" and they had reason so to do. But how much greater reason has the Christian to do so, who has laid hold on that better covenant, which "is ordered in all things and sure," and which shall never wax old, or decay!]

3. As his everlasting portion—

[It is not *here* only that God will be the portion of his people, but for ever *in the eternal world.* Such he was to Abraham; "I am thy shield, and thy eternal great reward[pp]." And such he will be to every Believer; as it is written, "My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion *for ever*[q]." In that tabernacle that is above, God will dwell in the midst of his people, and be their God, and will wipe away all tears from their eyes[r]. It is his presence that will constitute the felicity of heaven: there will be no sun or moon *there;* for God himself, and the Lamb, will be the light of that world; and all created enjoyment will vanish, like the light of the glowworm before the meridian sun[s]. Justly in this view of his privileges does David say, and justly may every Believer say, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage[t]."]

ADDRESS—

1. Let all avail themselves of the opportunity now afforded them—

[At this hour do "we preach peace to you by Jesus Christ[u];" and "as Ambassadors of God, we beseech you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." To all without exception is this invitation given. For every sinner in the universe has Christ "purchased reconciliation through the blood of his cross;" and to every one does he address those memorable words, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth[x]." Will any of you then be content to continue at enmity with God, and to have God an enemy to you? O lay down the weapons of your rebellion, and seek your

[o] Heb. vi. 17, 18. [p] Rom. ii. 17. [pp] Gen. xv. 1.
[q] Ps. lxxiii 26. [r] Rev. xxi. 3, 4. [s] ib. ver. 22, 23.
[t] Ps. xvi. 5, 6. [u] Acts x. 36. [x] Isai. xlv. 22.

your happiness in God. Surely "in his favour is life; and his loving-kindness is better than life itself." Only begin this day to rejoice in your God; and "there shall be joy amongst the angels in the presence of God on your account."]

2. Let all seek the highest attainments in the Divine life—

[There is a holy ambition which all should feel. We should not any of us be content to obtain *reconciliation with* God: we should seek to *rejoice in* God. We should say with David, "I will go unto the altar of God, of God my exceeding joy[y]." It is greatly to be lamented that the generality of Christians live far below their privileges. If only they have peace with God, and can rejoice in hope of his glory, and can glory in tribulations for his sake, they are ready to think, that they are in as good a state as they need to be. But, Brethren, whilst we rejoice that ye are *so* far advanced, we would have you "*not only so*:" we would have you "forget what is behind, and press forward towards that which is before." We would have you "covet earnestly the best gifts." It is your privilege "to rejoice in God all the day," yea, to "rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and glorified[z]." Nor is it your privilege only, but your duty also: for it is said, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory[a]." I call you then to live nigh to God, and to "delight yourselves in God," and to have even now "the earnest" of heaven in your souls[b]. "Let Israel then rejoice in Him that made him; and the Children of Zion be joyful in their King[c]."]

[y] Ps. xliii. 4. [z] 1 Pet. i. 8. [a] Isai. xlv. 25.
[b] Eph. i. 14. [c] Ps. cxlix. 2.

DCCCCXIV.

DEATH BY ADAM, AND LIFE BY CHRIST.

Rom. v. 18, 19. *Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. For, as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

THE more we investigate the Gospel of Christ, the more mysterious it appears in all its parts. To a superficial observer it seems that the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer is plain and simple: but it is surely an astonishing mystery, that those who have destroyed themselves, should be redeemed

redeemed by the blood of God's only dear Son, and be saved by a righteousness that was wrought out by him. Yet that is but a small part of the mystery revealed to us in the Gospel. There we learn, that at the instant of our birth we are under a sentence of condemnation for the sin of our first parent; and that, as we are lost in him, so we are to be recovered by the Lord Jesus Christ, inheriting righteousness and life from him, the second Adam, as we inherit sin and death from the first Adam. This is the subject of which the Apostle treats in the passage before us. He had throughout the preceding part of this Epistle declared the way of salvation through Christ: but now he traces up sin and death to Adam as our federal Head or Representative, and righteousness and life to Christ as our federal Head or Representative under the new covenant. This opens to us a new view of the Gospel, and leads us farther into the great mystery of redemption than the preceding statements had enabled us to penetrate.

That we may avail ourselves of the light which is thus afforded us, we shall,

I. Consider the comparison here instituted—

It is here assumed as an acknowledged truth, that by the sin of Adam we all were brought under guilt and condemnation—

[Adam was not a mere private individual, but the Head and Representative of all mankind. Hence what he did in eating the forbidden fruit, is imputed unto us, as though it had been done by us: and we are subjected to the punishment that was denounced against transgression, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This in the preceding context is repeatedly affirmed: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned[a]." Again, "Through the offence of one many be dead[b]:" Again, "The judgment was by one to condemnation[c]:" And again, "By one man's offence death reigned by one[d]." So also it is twice mentioned in our text. Nor is it merely asserted: it is *proved* also, and that too by an argument which all can easily understand. The death of infants demonstrates the truth in question: for, nothing is plainer

[a] ver. 12. [b] ver. 15. [c] ver. 16. [d] ver. 17.

plainer than that God will not inflict punishment, where no guilt attaches: but he does inflict punishment, even death itself, on infants, who cannot possibly have committed sin in their own persons. For whose sin then is this punishment inflicted? Surely for the sin of Adam, our first parent; who was the head and representative of all mankind. The law which denounced death as the penalty of transgression, comprehended, not him only, but us also: and therefore, having transgressed it in him, *we* are considered as sinners, and are subjected to all the penalties of transgression. To account for the agonies and death of new-born infants on any other supposition than this, is impossible.]

With this is compared our justification to life by the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ—

[Christ is that person "by whose obedience many are made righteous." He is given to us as a second Covenant-Head. There is however this difference between him and Adam: Adam was the head of all his *natural* seed; and Christ is the Head of all his *spiritual* seed. They are included in him; and all that he did or suffered is put to their account, as though they had done or suffered it themselves: and his entire righteousness is imputed to them for justification, precisely as Adam's disobedience is imputed to us for condemnation. The parallel indeed holds yet farther still: for as Adam's guilt is imputed to us before we commit personal sin, so is Christ's righteousness imputed to us before we perform any personal obedience. Nevertheless, our obedience is not therefore rendered either useless or uncertain; for, as from Adam we receive a corrupt nature, so from Christ we receive a holy and divine nature: and as all our personal disobedience aggravates the guilt and condemnation which we derived from Adam; so our personal obedience, after we have been justified in Christ Jesus, enhances the degrees of glory to which we are entitled at the instant of our justification. Now all this is plainly affirmed in our text: (*Read the text:*) nay, it is, in the verses preceding our text, affirmed, *that we receive more from Christ than ever we lost in Adam:* (Read ver. 15—17.) And this is a striking, and very important, truth. For,

First, *we are placed in a safer state* than that which we lost in Adam. Adam was placed in a state of probation, to stand or fall by his own obedience; and, notwithstanding all his advantages, he fell, and ruined both himself and all his posterity. But we, when justified in Christ's righteousness, are given to him, that we may be kept by his power unto everlasting salvation: and he has expressly declared, that "none shall ever pluck us out of his hands."

Next,

Next, *we are made to possess a better righteousness* than any which we could ever have inherited from Adam: for if he had stood, and we had stood in him, and partaken of his righteousness for ever, we should still have had only the righteousness of *a creature:* but now we have, and shall have to all eternity, the righteousness of *the Creator:* yes, "Jehovah himself is our righteousness:" and whereas, with a creature's righteousness, we could have claimed nothing, being only unprofitable servants, with the Creator's righteousness we may claim, *on the footing of justice* as well as of mercy, all the glory of heaven.

Once more: *Our happiness is infinitely enhanced* beyond any thing it could ever have been, if we had stood in Adam. The felicity of heaven would doubtless have been inconceivably great under *any* circumstances: but who can conceive what an addition it will receive from the consideration of its being the purchase of the Redeemer's blood, and the fruit of those eternal counsels by which the whole work of redemption was both planned and executed?

Thus then is the comparison between the first and second Adam shewn to be strictly just; except indeed that the scale preponderates beyond all expression or conception in favour of the Lord Jesus, who has done "MUCH MORE" for us than ever we lost in Adam; or than Adam, though he had continued sinless, ever could have done, either for himself or us.]

But that this subject may produce a suitable impression on our minds, we will,

II. Suggest one or two reflections upon it—

It is much to be regretted, that the great mysteries of religion are but too often made the subjects of mere speculation. But every doctrine of Christianity should be practically improved, and especially a doctrine of such vital importance as that before us. From the doctrine of our fall in Adam and our recovery in Christ, we cannot but observe,

1. How deep and unsearchable are the ways of God!

[That ever our first parent should be constituted a federal head to his posterity, so that they should stand or fall in him, is in itself a stupendous mystery. And it may appear to have been an arbitrary appointment, injurious to the whole race of mankind. But we do not hesitate to say, that if the whole race of mankind had been created at once in precisely the same state and circumstances as Adam was, they would have been as willing to stand or fall in Adam, as to have their lot depend

depend upon themselves; because they would have felt, that, whilst he possessed every advantage that they did, he had a strong inducement to stedfastness which they could not have felt, namely, the dependence of all his posterity upon his fidelity to God: and consequently, that their happiness would be more secure in his hands than in their own. But if it could now be put to every human Being to determine for himself this point; if the question were asked of every individual, Whether do you think it better that your happiness should depend on Adam, formed as he was in the full possession of all his faculties; subjected to one only temptation, and that in fact so small a temptation as scarcely to deserve the name; perfect in himself, and his only companion being perfect also, and no such thing as sin existing in the whole creation; whether would you prefer, I say, to depend on him, or on yourself, born into a world that lieth in wickedness, surrounded with temptations innumerable, and having all your faculties only in a state of infantine weakness, so as to be scarcely capable of exercising with propriety either judgment or volition: Would any one doubt a moment? Would not every person to whom such an option was given, account it an unspeakable mercy to have such a representative as Adam was, and to have his happiness depend on *him*, rather than on his own feeble capacity and power? There can be no doubt on this subject: for if Adam, in his more favourable circumstances, fell, much more should we in circumstances where it was scarcely possible to stand. Still however, though we acknowledge it to be a gracious and merciful appointment, we must nevertheless regard it as a stupendous mystery.

But what shall we say of the appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ to be a second Covenant-Head, to deliver us by his obedience from the fatal effects of Adam's disobedience? Here we are perfectly lost in wonder and amazement. For consider, Who Jesus was? He was the co-equal, co-eternal Son of God ——— Consider, What he undertook to do? He undertook to suffer in our place and stead all that was due to us, and to confer on us his righteousness with all the glory that was due to him ———Consider farther, On what terms he confers this blessing upon us? He requires only, that we believe in him: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" ——— Consider yet farther, What provision he has made for the final happiness of those who thus believe in him? He does not restore them to the *state of trial* in which Adam was originally placed, but to a state of *comparative security*, inasmuch as he himself undertakes to "perfect that which concerneth them," and to be "the Finisher of faith" to those in whom he has been "the Author of it[a]."

What

[a] Heb. xii. 2.

What an inscrutable mystery is here! that *such a person* should be given; and *such a righteousness* be wrought out by him! that an interest in this righteousness should be conferred on *such easy terms!* and lastly, that such security should be provided for all his believing people! Well might the Apostle say, "Great is the mystery of godliness:" and well may all the angels in heaven occupy themselves, as they do continually in searching into it with the profoundest adoration [b]. Let us then contemplate these wonders with holy awe. Let us not make them a theme for disputation, but a subject of incessant admiration, gratitude, and praise [c].]

2. How obvious and urgent is the duty of man!

[Here we are in the situation of fellow-creatures, wholly incapable of saving ourselves, and shut up to the way of salvation provided for us in the Gospel. God does not consult us, or ask our approbation of his plans. He calls us, not to give our opinion, but to accept his proffered mercy. To dispute, or sit in judgment on his dispensations, is vain. We are like ship-wrecked persons, ready to perish in the great deep. When the ship is just on the point of sinking, it is no time to complain, that our lives, by the laws of navigation, were made to depend on the skill of the captain; or that the management of the vessel had not been committed to ourselves; or that God, when he formed the world, placed a rock in that particular situation, notwithstanding he foresaw, from all eternity, that our ship would be wrecked upon it: all such thoughts at that time would be vain: our only consideration under such circumstances should be, How shall I be saved from perishing? And if we saw a ship hastening towards us for our preservation, we should be wholly occupied in contriving how we might secure the proffered aid. This, I say, is precisely our case: we are lost in Adam: but that God, who foresaw, that we should be wrecked in him, provided his only dear Son to be a Saviour to us; and has sent him to save all who feel their need of mercy, and are willing to enter into this ark of God. Behold then, Brethren, what your duty is: it is to "flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you." If you feel a rebellious thought arise, Why did God make me thus? let it be answered in the way prescribed by the Apostle, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God [d]? If you were not consulted about your dependence on Adam, were you consulted

[b] 1 Tim. iii. 16.

[c] With respect to children, we believe that, as they die in Adam, before they have incurred any *personal* guilt, so they will be saved in Christ, though they have not *personally* believed in him, or obeyed his commandments. And we think that this is strongly implied in ver. 15—17. But it is not necessary to enter into that part of the subject.

[d] Rom. ix. 20.

consulted about the appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the way of recovery by him? No: this was the unsolicited Gift of God, who determined thus to glorify himself in blessing and exalting you. Embrace then, with all thankfulness, the salvation offered you in the Gospel. Lay hold on Christ: rely upon him: place all your hope in his obedience unto death; seek for justification solely through his blood and righteousness: and expect to receive from him all, yea "exceeding abundantly above all that ye can either ask or think."*]

* The corruption that we derive from Adam, is a totally distinct subject from that treated of in the text; and on that account is left unnoticed here.

DCCCCXV.

THE CHRISTIAN RISEN WITH CHRIST IN NEWNESS OF LIFE.

Rom. vi. 8—11. *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him: for in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

THE Gospel in every age, when freely and faithfully delivered, has been calumniated as injurious to morality. But St. Paul, though he well knew how his doctrines would be misrepresented, did not on that account mutilate the Gospel, or declare it less freely than it had been revealed to him: he proclaimed salvation altogether by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, without any works or deservings on our part: but at the same time he shewed that good works, though excluded from any share in justifying the soul, would of necessity be practised by every Believer; because the Believer, by his very profession, was, and could not but be, "dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness." He shewed, that there would of necessity be in the Believer's soul a conformity to his Lord and Saviour, since he bound himself to it in his baptismal engagements, or rather professed

professed to have the actual experience of it before he was baptized; so that he must be a hypocrite, and no true Believer, if he was not holy both in heart and life. To this effect he speaks in the whole of the preceding context[a]; ——— and in the words which we have just read, he confirms the idea, and founds upon it an animated exhortation.

To elucidate this difficult, but important subject, we shall consider,

I. The truth he assumes—

[He takes it for granted that the Believer is "dead with Christ." The Believer, by virtue of his union with Christ, partakes in all that Christ either did or suffered for him. Was Christ crucified, dead, and buried? The Believer also is crucified, dead, and buried: only Christ underwent this in his body; whereas the Believer experiences it in his soul. The Believer has what is called "the old man," or "the body of sin:" and *this* it is which undergoes a change equivalent to that which Christ experienced in his mortal body. This old man is "crucified." Crucifixion was a long-protracted punishment: but though the death of the crucified person was slow and gradual, it was sure. It is in this way that "the old man," or "the body of sin," in the Believer, is destroyed: it is not so instantly slain, as never to move again: but it is nailed to the cross: it is gradually weakened: and, in the purpose and intention and determination of the Believer, it is as really dead, as if it were already altogether annihilated. The Believer, at his baptism, considered this as solemnly engaged for on his part, and as shadowed forth, yea, and as pledged also to him on the part of God, in the rite itself: "he was baptized into Christ's death, and buried, as it were, with Christ by baptism into death." This was *his profession*; and this is *his obligation*: and wherever true and saving faith exists in the soul, this profession is realized, and this obligation performed. Hence it may be assumed as an universal truth, that, as a cion participates in the state of the stock into which it has been engrafted, so the Believer, engrafted as he is into a crucified Saviour, "is planted together with him in the likeness of his death," or, in other words, is "dead with Christ."]

In close connexion with this is,

II. The persuasion he intimates—

"We believe," says he, "that we shall also live with him."

[It

[It is not in his death only that the Believer is conformed to Christ, but in his resurrection also. As the Believer has an "old man," which dies, so he has also "a new man" which lives: and in the latter, no less than in the former, he resembles Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ, in his risen and ascended state, lives *with* God, and *to* God, employing for his God and Father all the power that has been committed to him. Thus the Believer lives in a state of intimate fellowship with God, consecrating to him all his newly-acquired powers, and improving for him every faculty that he possesses. This is his privilege, no less than his duty: and therefore we may be fully persuaded that the weakest Believer, if truly upright, shall attain this high and honourable employment.]

This persuasion is founded on a firm and solid basis—

[We "know that Christ dieth no more." Those whom he raised to life, as Lazarus and others, were constrained at last to pay the debt which our nature owes, and to yield to the stroke of death: but "over Christ death hath no more dominion." He so fully expiated sin, that none of its penal consequences attach to him any longer. But the life which he possesses, has both perpetuity and perfection, being wholly and eternally devoted to the care of his people, and the honour of his heavenly Father. And here is the Believer's security: "Because Christ liveth, he shall live also[b]." The Believer's "life is hid with Christ in God;" yea, "Christ himself is his life:" and therefore we may be assured, that his believing people shall be preserved to "appear with him in glory[c]." We *do* live *in* him: and therefore we *shall* live *with* him for evermore.]

From hence is deduced,

III. The duty he inculcates—

["Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This should be a point fixed and settled in our minds: I am a Christian: I am dead to sin: I have no more to do with "my former lusts in my ignorance[d]," than Christ himself has with the "sins which he once bore in his own body on the tree." "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," have no more charms for me[e]: those "lords which once had dominion over me," are now dead; and I am liberated from their yoke[f]. As a Christian, I possess a new and heavenly life: I am alive unto God, as Christ himself is; and must live unto God,

[b] John. xiv. 19. [c] Col. iii. 3, 4. [d] 1 Pet. i. 14. & iv. 2, 3.
[e] 1 John ii. 15, 16.
[f] This is the precise idea contained in v. 7.

God, as Christ himself does. There is not an act performed by Christ either in providence or grace, which has not respect to the glory of his Father: so, "whether I eat, or drink, or whatever I do, I must do all to the glory of God[g]." As for being satisfied with any lower standard, it is impossible: my Christian profession utterly forbids it. Those who seek to be justified by their works, may be satisfied with such a tale of bricks, as shall, in their apprehension, screen them from punishment; but I can be satisfied with nothing but a perfect conformity to Christ. My lusts that are crucified, shall never (God helping me) come down from the cross: there they are doomed to perish: and the sooner they die, the better. My new life shall be spent as Christ's is, in executing the office assigned me, and in glorifying my God. Christians, this is the state to which you are to aspire; and if you rest in any thing short of this, you are not worthy of the Christian name.]

In this subject we may SEE,

1. The proper tendency of the Gospel—

[The proper tendency of the Gospel is, to "sanctify us wholly," and to make us pure, as Christ himself is pure[h]. And let the enemies of the Gospel calumniate it ever so much as tending to licentiousness, they shew that they believe it to be a doctrine according to godliness, by the excessive offence which they take at the smallest inconsistency in the Christian's conduct. If they did not know that his principles *required*, and *tended to*, the highest possible perfection, why are they so offended, and why do they exult so much, at the smallest imperfection? The proper tendency of the Gospel then is holiness, the enemies themselves being judges.]

2. The true criterion whereby to judge of our faith in Christ—

[We will not disparage other parts of Christian experience; but the only safe test whereby to try ourselves, is, the degree in which we are dead to sin, and alive to God——— "The tree must be known by its fruits"———]

3. The connexion between our duty and our happiness—

[We have fixed the standard of Christian duty high. True: but does any one doubt, whether such a conformity to Christ be not also our truest happiness? Verily, heaven itself consists in this: "We shall be like him, when we shall see him as he is[i]."]

[g] 1 Cor. x. 31. [h] 1 Thess. v. 23. 1 John iii. 3. [i] ib. ver. 2.

DCCCCXVI.

UNPROFITABLENESS AND FOLLY OF SIN.

Rom. vi. 21. *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.*

AS an appeal to the judgment of men is, when just, the most powerful mode of silencing the contentious, so an appeal to their conscience is the strongest possible method of convincing the ignorant, and of humbling the proud. With such kinds of argumentation the Scripture abounds. God himself appeals to his apostate people: "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and become vain?" "Have I been a wilderness to Israel[a]?" Thus, in the passage before us, St. Paul, labouring to impress the Christians at Rome with a sense of the indispensable necessity of renouncing all their former ways, and devoting themselves wholly to the Lord, puts to them this pungent question; "What fruit had ye then of those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" To answer this question, no strength of intellect, no extent of information, is required: nothing is wanting but an honest and upright heart. The poor, as well as the rich, can tell whether they have been happy in the ways of sin: to the one therefore, as well as to the other, we would address the language of our text; intreating every one to consult the records of his own conscience, and to answer to himself the question, as in the presence of his God.

The points respecting which we would make our appeal to all, are,

I. The unprofitableness of sin, as learned by experience—

Whether men have drunk deep of the cup of pleasure, or have followed their earthly inclinations with more measured steps, we would ask, in reference to all their former ways,

1. What fruit of them had ye *at the time?*

[Sin,

[a] Jer. ii. 3, 31.

[Sin, previous to the commission of it, promises much: but what solid satisfaction has it ever afforded us! Suppose a man to have had all the means of gratification that ever Solomon possessed, and, like him, to have withheld his heart from no joy; still, we would ask him, Was your pleasure of any long duration? Was it without alloy? Is not that true which Solomon has said, "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness[b]?" I doubt not but that every man who will faithfully relate his own experience, will "say of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it[c]?"

A similar testimony must be given by those who have been the most sober and discreet. They have not, it is true, the same measure of guilt upon their consciences, as they would have had, if, like the others, they had "run into every excess of riot:" but if, as must be confessed by all, they have lived to themselves, and not unto the Lord, we must put the same question to them, Have you found real happiness in your ways? Have you not, in the midst of all your self-complacency, had a secret consciousness that you were not prepared for death and judgment? and did not that consciousness embitter your lives, so far at least, that you could not bear to think of the state of your souls, and the realities of the eternal world? ——— God has said, that "the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, which casteth up mire and dirt." Whatever peace therefore you have felt has been a false peace, which in reality rendered you more miserable, in proportion as it hid your misery from your view. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked[d]."]

2. What fruit have ye *in the retrospect?*

[Supposing sin to have made us ever so happy at the time, how does it appear when we look back upon it? Is not that which was "rolled as a sweet morsel under the tongue become as gall in the stomach?" Would not the voluptuary be well pleased on the whole, that the criminal excesses of his former life had never been committed? Would he not be well satisfied to have lost the gratifications, if he could expunge from his conscience, and from the book of God's remembrance, the guilt which they have entailed upon him? ——— And if the man who has sought his happiness in less criminal enjoyments, but has wasted in mere earthly pursuits the time that was given him to prepare for eternity, could recall his mis-spent hours, would he not rather that they should have been spent in seeking the things belonging to his peace? Though he may not look with complacency on a pious character who has given up himself unreservedly to God, does he not

[b] Prov. xiv. 13. [c] Eccl. ii. 2. [d] Isai. lvii. 20, 21.

not secretly reverence that man, and wish that his latter end might be like his? ———]

3. What fruit have ye *in the prospect* of your great account?

[If ever we look forward to death and judgment, what do we think of a sensual or worldly life in reference to those seasons? Will it afford us any pleasure in a dying hour, to reflect, that we have, on such and such occasions, gratified our criminal desires, or indulged in revelling and excess? Or will a life of mere external decency afford us comfort, when we consider how we have neglected God and our own souls? Shall we not then wish that we had paid more attention to the Saviour, and lived under the influence of his blessed Spirit? Still more, when standing at the judgment-seat of Christ, will it be any joy to us, that, whilst in this world, we took so little pains to obtain mercy of the Lord, and to secure his favour? ——— Alas! alas! How will a carnal or worldly life *then* appear? Would to God, that we would view things *now*, as we shall surely view them *in that day*!]

Instructed by these lessons of experience, let us proceed to contemplate,

II. The folly of sin, as taught us by grace—

The very first effect of grace is to humble us before God. The more enlarged our views are of our past transgressions, the more shall we blush and be confounded in the remembrance of them. Of every true Christian it may with certainty be affirmed, that, like Job, he "abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes." He is "ashamed,"

1. That he has so requited the goodness of his God—

[In an unconverted state, men can receive innumerable blessings at the Lord's hand, and never consider from whence they flow. Even the great work of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ is not regarded as any sufficient incentive to love and serve him. But no sooner does grace enter into the soul, than all the wonders of God's love and mercy are seen in their proper colours; and the man is amazed at his more than brutish ingratitude. How wonderful does it appear, that God should so love him as to give his only dear Son to die for him; and yet that he should live all his days in an utter contempt of that stupendous mystery, trampling on that precious blood that was shed to cleanse him from sin, and doing despite to that blessed Spirit, who strove to bring him to repentance! Verily,

Verily, that expression of Agur is adopted by him, not as an hyperbole, but as a just representation of his case; "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man[e]." The circumstance of his being forgiven is so far from obliterating this sense of his baseness, that it renders the feeling of it incomparably more poignant; according as the prophet Ezekiel hath said, "Then shall ye lothe yourselves for all your iniquities, and for all your abominations, after that I am pacified towards you, saith the Lord."]

2. That he has bartered for such trifles an immortal soul—

[The loss of the soul is scarcely thought of, when the fascinations of sin are strongly felt: but after a man is awakened to see, that "the end of these things is death," what folly and madness does a life of sin appear! Even if the whole world could have been gained, it would be regarded as of no value in comparison of the soul: how empty then and vain do such trifles as he has obtained appear, when for the enjoyment of them his eternal interests have been sacrificed, and the everlasting wrath of God incurred! The folly of Esau in selling his birthright for a mess of pottage may be considered as wisdom in comparison of his, in selling heaven and his immortal soul for the transient pleasures of sin: and, if an irrevocable sentence of exclusion from the heavenly inheritance be passed upon him, he is ready to acknowledge the justice of it, or, like the man without the wedding garment, to confess by silence the equity of God's judgments.]

ADDRESS,

1. Those who are yet seeking their happiness in the creature—

[We need not here discriminate between different degrees of guilt. It is sufficient for our condemnation that we have lived to ourselves, rather than to God. Whatever we may have had recourse to for consolation, it has proved only like the husks with which the Prodigal sought to satisfy the cravings of nature: nothing but the bread that is in our Father's house can ever satisfy an immortal soul. O let us think, What must be the consequence of living at a distance from God[f]? Speak not peace to yourselves in such a state! Well does St. Peter say, "What must *the end* be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" Only let *the end* of our course be kept in view, and we shall see the folly and madness of every pursuit, that has not an immediate tendency to secure the blessedness of heaven.]

2. Those

[e] Prov. xxx. 2.

[f] See Jer. vi. 15, 16.

2. Those who are seeking their happiness in God—

[You have no reason to be ashamed of the fruit which you have gathered. *At the time* that you have been serving God, you have found "the work of righteousness to be peace," and, that "in keeping God's commandments there is great reward." *In the retrospect* of a life devoted to God there is the purest joy. "Our rejoicing," says St. Paul, "is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world." And O! what comfort is there *in the prospect* of our great account! We know that "if we have our fruit unto holiness, our end will be everlasting life:" and if in our last hours we can say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," we may add with him, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me." Go on then, Brethren, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." We congratulate you that you have learned to blush and to be ashamed of all your former ways: and we would, *as we are specially instructed by God himself,* urge you to a most careful observance of all the commandments of your God[g]. This is the way to preserve a good conscience before him; and so acting, "you will not be ashamed before him at his coming[h]."]

[g] See Ezek. xliii. 10th verse to the first clause of the 12th.
[h] 1 John ii. 28.

DCCCCXVII.

MAN'S DESERT, AND GOD'S MERCY.

Rom. vi. 23. *The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

THE distribution of rewards and punishments in the day of judgment will be in perfect agreement with the works of men: the righteous will be exalted to happiness; the wicked be doomed to misery. The Gospel makes no difference with respect to this: it provides relief for the penitent, but rather aggravates than removes the condemnation of the impenitent. But it opens to us an important fact; namely, that the punishment of the ungodly is the proper fruit and deserved recompence of their own works: whereas the reward bestowed upon the godly is a free

free unmerited gift of God for Christ's sake. The Apostle has been shewing, throughout this whole chapter, that the Gospel increases, instead of relaxing, our obligation to good works; and that it will avail for the salvation of those only who "have their fruit unto holiness:" but in the text he assures us, that they who are saved will be saved by mere grace; whereas they who perish will perish utterly through their own demerit.

In the words before us, we have a short, but accurate, description of,

I. Man's desert—

By "death," we must understand everlasting misery—

[It is a truth that temporal death was introduced by sin: but that cannot be the whole that is meant by the Apostle in the text, because the "death" procured by sin stands in direct opposition to the "life" which is bestowed by God, which is expressly said to be "eternal." By "death" therefore we understand an everlasting banishment from God's presence, together with a "suffering of his vengeance in eternal fire."]

This is the penalty that is due to sin—

[It is in vain that people endeavour to soften down the expressions of Scripture upon this subject, and to substitute annihilation for misery. Our blessed Lord, in his account of the judgment-day, declares that he himself, as the Judge of quick and dead, will doom the wicked to a participation of the misery inflicted on the fallen angels, and that their punishment shall be of the very same duration with the happiness of the righteous[a].

Nor is this more than the real *desert* of sin. The word we translate "wages," means "provisions[b]," which in the earlier part of the Roman empire constituted the only pay of soldiers: and it must be confessed, that a soldier's pay, at the best, is but a very moderate compensation for the dangers and fatigues of war: his wages are certainly no higher than justice demands. Thus the penal evil of damnation is no more than a just recompence for the moral evil of sin: it is the "wages" due to sin.

It is worthy of remark also, that this awful doom is not spoken of as the penalty of many or of great sins, but of "*sin*," of every sin, whether great or small. Every "transgression

[a] Matt. xxv. 41, 46. See also Mark ix. 43—48. [b] ὀψώνια.

gression of God's holy law is sin[c];" and, though all sins are not of equal malignity, there is not any sin which does not deserve God's wrath and fiery indignation, or against which an everlasting curse is not denounced[d].

How terrible then is the desert of every man, of the more moral and decent, as well as of the immoral and profane! for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and therefore all are obnoxious to the punishment of sin.]

Let us now turn our thoughts to a more pleasing subject, namely,

II. God's mercy—

Notwithstanding our ill desert, God has tendered to us everlasting life—

["He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and live." He has opened the gates of heaven, and invited sinners of every description to enter in. Nor has he required any thing to be done in order to purchase an admittance into it: he offers it freely, as a "gift" to all who will accept it. His invitation is to all who wish for it, to those also who have no money, to come and receive it at his hands "without money, and without price[e]." In this he has strongly marked the different grounds of a sinner's condemnation, and a saint's acceptance. Misery is awarded to the one, as "*wages*" earned; and happiness is conferred upon the other, as a *gift* of grace. Indeed our minds must be humbled; and we must be willing to accept salvation as a gift: for, if we carry any price whatever in our hands, we cut ourselves off from all hope of obtaining the desired blessing[f].]

This gift however is bestowed only "through the Lord Jesus Christ"—

[All possibility of regaining happiness by the covenant of works was prevented by the very terms of that covenant: in token of which, the way to the tree of life was obstructed by a fiery sword[g]. But another, and a better "way, is opened to it through the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we may have boldness, and access with confidence" into the presence of our God[h]. Through him, as a Mediator, God can exercise mercy towards us in perfect consistency with his own honour; and through him, *as the appointed channel*, God will convey to us all the blessings of grace and glory. But then he expects that we *come to him through Christ*, and *receive his blessings from Christ*: for, as there is no other way unto the Father but

[c] 1 John iii. 4. [d] Gal. iii. 10. [e] Isai. lv. 1.
[f] Gal. v. 2, 4. [g] Gen. iii. 24. [h] Heb. x. 19, 20.

but through the Son[i], so neither is there any way of obtaining from the Father, but by receiving out of the fulness which he has treasured up for us in Christ Jesus[k].]

ADDRESS,

1. Those who are living in any allowed sin—

[We will suppose you are free from any gross immoralities; but that you are neglecting the great concerns of your souls, or attending to them with only a divided heart. Consider then, I beseech you, what you are doing: you are earning wages every day, every hour, every moment: whether you think of it or not, you are earning wages, and the day of reckoning is near at hand, when they shall be paid you by a just and holy God. Every act, every word, every thought is increasing the sum that shall be paid you: and who can calculate the amount of a debt which has been increasing with awful rapidity from the first moment that you began to act? Yes, you have been doing nothing throughout your whole lives, but earning wages that shall be paid you to the full, or, in other words, "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath[l]." Consider, if the desert of *one* sin is death, What must be your desert, whose sins are more in number than the sands upon the sea-shore? Reflect on this, while there is an opportunity of cancelling the debt, and while the mercy of God can be extended to you. But remember, that you must not attempt to discharge the smallest part of this debt yourselves: if you take but one single sin upon you, you must suffer death for ever. Go therefore to Christ, and through him unto the Father: go with the guilt of all your sins upon you; cast yourselves entirely upon the mercy of your God; plead nothing but the merits of his dear Son; and "look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life[m]."]

2. Those who have obtained mercy, and deliverance from sin—

[Numberless are the considerations which should excite your gratitude for the mercies you have received. Consider the greatness of the guilt that has been forgiven you; the riches of the glory which has been conferred upon you; the freeness with which it has been bestowed; and, above all, the means which have been used in order that you might be partakers of these benefits, even the appointment of God's only-begotten Son to be your dying Saviour, and your living Head. Consider these things, I say, and then judge what ought to be the frame of your minds. What an abhorrence should you have of sin! What gratitude should you feel towards that God who exercised such mercy towards you, and towards

[i] John xiv 6.
[k] Col. i. 19. John i. 16.
[l] Rom. ii. 5.
[m] Jude 21.

towards that adorable Jesus, through whose mediation alone it could ever have been communicated! Stir up yourselves then to "render unto God according to these benefits;" and exert yourselves to the uttermost to "glorify him with your bodies and your spirits, which are his[n]."]

[n] 1 Cor. vi. 20.

DCCCCXVIII.

DEADNESS TO THE LAW, AND UNION WITH CHRIST.

Rom. vii. 4. *My Brethren, ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

THAT the Gospel is hostile to the interests of morality, is an objection that has been raised against it, from the first promulgation of it by the Apostles, even to the present age. That the Gospel is a most wonderful display of grace and mercy, must be acknowledged: but it does not therefore encourage any man to live in sin: on the contrary, it teaches men, and binds them by every possible tie, to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." To this effect the Apostle speaks throughout the whole preceding chapter. He begins with stating the objection urged against the Gospel; "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" And then he answers it at large; and affirms, that the covenant of grace, so far from invalidating our obligation to good works, absolutely secures the performance of them[a]. In the chapter before us he is continuing the same argument, and putting it in a new light: he represents men as by nature married to the law, and bringing forth fruit to sin and death; but afterwards, as separated from the law, and married to Christ, in order to their bringing forth the fruits of holiness to the praise and glory of God.

His words will naturally lead us to consider,

I. The state to which we are brought by the death of Christ—

We

[a] Ch. vi. 14—16.

We are all by nature bound to the law—

[God gave his law to Adam as a covenant, promising life to him if he were obedient, and denouncing death against him as the penalty of disobedience. Under that covenant we all are born: and on the terms prescribed by it we look for happiness or misery in the future world. The connexion between us and it is indissoluble; like that of an husband; our obligations to whom nothing but death can dissolve.]

But by the death of Christ we are liberated from it—

[Christ, our incarnate Lord, has fulfilled every part of God's law; enduring its penalties, as well as executing its commands: and this he has done, as our Surety: so that, if we believe in him, we may plead his obedience unto death in bar of all the punishment it denounces against us; and may even plead it also as having procured for us a title to all its promised blessings. Our blessed Lord, in fulfilling the law, has abrogated it *as a covenant*; and has obtained for us a new and better covenant, of which he himself is the Surety[b]. *As a rule of conduct*, the law does, and ever must, continue in force; because it is the transcript of the mind and will of God, and contains a perfect rule for the conduct of his creatures[c]: but *as a covenant*, it is dissolved; and is, in respect of us, dead; so that we have no more connexion with it than a woman has with her deceased husband: our obligations to it, and our expectations from it, have ceased for ever[d]. This is a just and beautiful representation of the Believer's state: perhaps there is not in all the Scriptures another image that conveys a complete idea of our state, in so clear, and so intelligible a way as this. We all see in a moment the bonds by which a woman is tied to her husband during his life, and the total dissolution of them all by his death: we see that the deceased husband has no longer any authority over her, nor can any longer be to her a source either of good or evil. Now if we transfer this idea to the law, and think of the law as a husband that is dead, or as a covenant that is annulled, then we shall have a just view of a Believer's state respecting it. Throughout the whole context, St. Paul expatiates so fully upon this point, and explains himself so clearly, that we cannot possibly mistake his meaning[e]. The only doubt that can possibly arise is, What law he refers to? But this doubt is dissipated in a moment: for he speaks of that law, which prohibits inordinate desire; and consequently it is, and must be, the *moral* law[f].]

Such being the liberty which Christ has procured for us, let us consider,

II. The

[b] Heb. viii. 6. 8, 13. [c] 1 Cor. ix. 21. [d] Gal. ii. 19.
[e] ver. 1—6. [f] ver. 7.

II. The improvement we should make of it—

Our blessed Lord offers himself to us as an husband—

[Under this idea he is frequently spoken of in the Old Testament[g]———The same is also frequently applied to him in the New Testament[h]———In some sense indeed it is the espousal only that takes place in this world[i]——— The consummation is deferred till our arrival in the world above[k]———]

In this relation we should cordially receive him—

[Our former husband being dead, we are at liberty to be married to another. And where shall we find one who is more worthy of all our love and obedience? If Jesus so loved us when enemies, as to lay down his own life for us, what will he not do for us, when we become bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh; yea, when we become "one spirit with him[l]?" To him then let us unite ourselves by faith, and devote ourselves to him as wholly and exclusively, as the most faithful and affectionate of women does to her newly-acquired lord.]

We shall then have the honour and happiness of bringing forth fruit unto God—

[By our connexion with the law, we have brought forth fruit only unto sin and death: but by the mighty operation of Divine grace, we shall be enabled to bring forth fruit unto God, and holiness, and life[m]. We shall no longer live under the influence of a slavish spirit, aiming only at the mere letter of the commandment, and regarding even that as an irksome service; but we shall aspire after the utmost spirit of the commandment, and strive with holy ardour to make the highest possible attainments, longing, if possible, to be "holy as God is holy," and to be "perfect as God is perfect." Our services will resemble those of the heavenly choir, who look, and watch, and pant, as it were, for an opportunity to testify their love to God, and to execute, in all its extent, his holy will.

How should the prospect of such fruit stimulate our desires after Christ! Let us bear in mind, that the bringing of us to such a state was the great object which he sought in giving up himself for us[n]; and let it be also the great object of our solicitude in devoting ourselves to him[o].]

From

[g] Isai. liv. 5. & lxii. 5. Ps. xlv. 10—17, is, as it were, a celebration of the heavenly nuptials.
[h] John iii. 19. Eph. v. 25—27. [i] Hos. ii. 19, 20. 2 Cor. xi. 2.
[k] Rev. xix. 7, 8. & xxi. 9, 10. [l] Eph. v. 30. 1 Cor. vi. 17.
[m] Compare Rom. vi, 21, 22. with our text and context.
[n] 1 Pet. ii. 24. [o] Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

From hence then it appears,

1. How concerned we are to know the law—

[It was "to those only who knew the law," that the Apostle addressed himself in our text[p]: others could not have understood his meaning, but would have accounted all his representations "foolishness[q]." Thus shall we also be incapable of entering into the sublime import of this passage, if we do not understand the nature of the law, the extent of its requirements, the awfulness of its penalties, and the hopeless condition of all who are yet under it as a covenant of life and death. But if we have just views of the law, then shall we be prepared for the Gospel, and be determined, through grace, that we will not give sleep to our eyes, or slumber to our eye-lids, till we have obtained an interest in Christ, and been received into a covenant of grace with him, as our Husband, our Saviour, and our ALL.]

2. How interested we are in embracing the Gospel—

[By this we are brought into a new state: we have new relations, both to God and man: our spirit is altogether new, as our attainments also are: our hopes and prospects also are new: "A beggar taken from a dunghill, and united to the greatest of earthly princes[r]," would experience a very small change in comparison of that which we experience, when we enter into the marriage covenant with Christ. O let us consent to his gracious proposals, and give up ourselves wholly unto him; then shall we "know the blessedness of his chosen," and comprehend, as far as such imperfect Beings can, the incomprehensible wonders of his love; and after bringing forth fruit to his glory here, we shall be partakers of his kingdom in the world above.]

[p] ver. 1. [q] 1 Cor. ii. 14. [r] 1 Sam. ii. 8.

DCCCCXIX.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE LAW.

Rom. vii. 9. *I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

WHEN we behold the extreme supineness of those around us in relation to their eternal concerns, we are naturally led to inquire, What the reason of it is? Is it that they imagine there is no God; or no future state; or no connexion between their present life and their eternal destiny? No: they acknowledge their account-

accountableness to God; but they are ignorant of the rule by which they shall be judged: and hence they conclude that they are in no danger, when, if they were apprised of their real state, they would be filled with alarm and terror. Thus it was with the apostle Paul previous to his conversion: whilst ignorant of the spiritual nature of God's law, he thought himself secure of acceptance with God: but when he had juster views of the law, he had juster views of his own spiritual condition also. Here then, as in a glass, we see,

I. The apprehensions which ignorant men have of their state before God—

[None are so blind as to think they have never sinned: but the generality suppose that they have never sinned in any great degree, so as to endanger their eternal happiness, or to justify God in consigning them over to eternal misery. If in some respects their *actions* have been incorrect, they have had no bad *intentions*: their *conduct* may have been *bad;* but their *hearts* were *good*. If they have refrained from gross immoralities, and been observant of some outward duties, they will, like the Pharisee, "thank God that they are not as other men;" and will boast before him of the good deeds which they have done[a]. As for being in any danger of perishing, they cannot for a moment admit the idea: they think, that if God were to cast *them* into hell, he would be unjust; that *they* have never merited such a doom: and it would be quite irreconcileable with the goodness of God to suppose him capable of proceeding with such severity against persons of their description. Such were Paul's views of himself; "he was alive without the law once:" having extremely contracted views of his duty, he thought he had done nothing to deserve punishment, and was secure of eternal life and salvation. And such is the delusion by which the whole host of unconverted men are blinded at this day.]

Hence we perceive,

II. The means by which alone they can be brought to a juster knowledge of their state—

[When God was pleased to arrest Paul in his way to Damascus, and to reveal himself to him, he discovered to him the spirituality and extent of the law. Paul had before thought that the commandments related only to outward acts; whereas he was now made to see that an inordinate desire was as much forbidden

[a] Luke xviii. 11 12.

forbidden as the most criminal action; and that an impure or angry thought were in God's sight as adultery or murder[b]: he saw too that the curse of the law was denounced against every violation of its commands; and that it as truly condemned men for a dissatisfied or envious wish, as for the most flagrant transgression[c]. From this time all his delusions vanished: he no longer cherished the fond idea of meriting salvation by his past or future obedience: he saw that he had not in any one action of his life come up to the full demands of the law; and that consequently he must renounce all dependence on the law for his justification before God.

Thus were *his* views rectified: and it is in this way alone that *any one* can attain a just knowledge of his state. "The commandment must come" with power to his conscience: he must see *the spirituality* of the law as extending to every thought and motion of the heart, and *the holiness* of the law as unalterably consigning over to the curse every one who shall transgress it in the smallest particular. Then his hopes from it will for ever vanish; and he will seek for mercy solely through the atoning blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus.]

But let us more distinctly consider,

III. The view they will have of themselves, when rightly informed—

[Whilst men are ignorant what the law requires, sin appears to be, as it were, dead, and destitute of power either to enslave or condemn them: but when they have a discovery of the law, they will perceive that sin has all along exercised a tyrannic sway over them, and brought them under the heaviest condemnation. Their whole life will appear to have been one uninterrupted course of sin; and to have been spent, unwittingly indeed, but truly, in "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." Their best actions now will be viewed as defiled with sin, and as deserving punishment: and they will see their need of one to "bear the iniquity of their holy things," as well as of their more evident transgressions. They will now confess, that "if God should enter into judgment with them, they could not answer him" for one act, or word, or thought, in their whole lives. Hence they lie before him as sinners under sentence of "death," and cast themselves wholly on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Instead of rising against the denunciations of his wrath, as they once did, they are dumb[d]; well knowing that "he will be justified in his sayings, and be clear when he judgeth[e]." Thus from thinking them-

[b] ver. 7. with Matt. v. 22, 23.
[c] Gal. iii. 10.
[d] Matt. xxii. 12.
[e] Ps. li. 4.

themselves "alive" and pure, "sin revives in them, and they die."]

IMPROVEMENT—

1. How mistaken then are they who imagine that they have no cause to fear the wrath of God!

[We will grant, that, according to the world's estimate, they are very worthy characters: but are they more exemplary than the apostle Paul was before his conversion? Let them hear his own account of himself, and judge[1]. If then he, when his eyes were opened, saw that he was a "dead" condemned sinner, let not any of us delude ourselves with the idea that we are in any better state ———]

2. How suited is the Gospel to those who feel their guilt and misery!

[Are we *lost*? it was such persons that Christ came to *seek* and *save*. Have we nothing to present to God in order to obtain salvation? He requires nothing at our hands, but to receive it freely from him "without money, and without price" ——— Let "the law then be to us as a schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ;" and let us look to "Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."]

[1] Phil. iii. 4—6.

DCCCCXX.

SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS OF BELIEVERS.

Rom. vii. 18—23. *I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

OF all evils that can be mentioned, Antinomianism is the worst; because it makes the Lord Jesus Christ himself a minister of sin, and turns the most glorious revelation of his grace into an occasion of unbounded licentiousness. But whilst we reprobate with utter abhorrence the idea of sinning that grace may abound,

we

we dare not, with some, deny or pervert the Gospel of Christ. We must affirm, that the Gospel offers to us a free and full salvation through the blood of Christ, and that they who believe in Christ are altogether dead to the law, so as to have nothing to hope for from its promises, or to fear from its threats. If, from this assertion, any one should infer that we think ourselves at liberty to violate the precepts of the law, he would be much mistaken. There were some who put this construction on St. Paul's statements; to whom he replied, "Shall we then continue in sin, that grace may abound?" and again, "Shall we then sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace[a]?" To each of these questions he answered, "God forbid:" and in like manner we reject with indignation the remotest idea that we would make the Gospel an occasion of sin.

But, whilst St. Paul vindicated himself from this charge, and shewed, that, as a woman who had lost her husband was at liberty to be married to another man, so the law to which he once owed allegiance being dead, he was at liberty to be married to Christ, and by him to bring forth fruit unto God.

The terms however in which he expressed himself seemed to criminate the law, as much as he had before seemed to cast reflections on the Gospel. "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death[b]." Here, as he had before denied to the law the office of justifying a sinner, so *now, in appearance*, he seemed to accuse it as being to him the author both of sin and death. But these representations also he rejects; and shews, that the law had only been the *occasion* of sin, and not the *cause* of it[c]; and that it had also been the *occasion* of death, but was by no means the *cause* of it[d]. The proper *cause* both of sin and of death was the corruption of our nature, which remains with us even to our dying hour;

[a] Rom. vi. 1, 15. [b] ver. 5. [c] ver. 8.
[d] ver. 13.

hour; as he himself could testify by bitter experience. This experience of his he then proceeds to describe. But as Commentators have differed widely from each other in their explanations of the passage, we will endeavour to shew,

I. Of whom it is to be understood—

That we may bring the matter to a fair issue, we will distinctly inquire,

1. Does the passage relate the experience of an ungodly man, or of one that is truly pious?

[Those who explain it of an ungodly man say, that the whole preceding chapter represents a true Christian as made free from sin[e]; and that to interpret this passage of a true Christian, would be to make the Apostle contradict himself. As for the opposition which the person here spoken of makes to his sinful propensities, it is nothing more (say they) than the ordinary conflict between reason and passion; and it may therefore properly be interpreted as experienced by an ungodly man.

But to this we answer, that, though an ungodly man may feel some restraints from his conscience, and consequently some conflicts between reason and passion, he cannot say that he really "hates sin," or that "he delights in the law of God after the inward man[f]." The carnal and unrenewed mind neither is, nor can be, subject to the law of God[g]; it is altogether enmity against God[h]: and therefore the character here drawn cannot possibly be assigned to an ungodly man.]

2. Does St. Paul in this passage personate a godly man who is in a low state of grace, or does he speak altogether of himself?

[That the Apostle does sometimes speak in the person of another, in order that he may inculcate truth in a more inoffensive manner, is certain[i]: but we conceive it to be clear that he speaks here in his own person: for it is undeniable that he speaks in his own person in the preceding part of the chapter, where he tells us what he *was* in his unconverted state[k]: and now he tells us what he *is*, at the time of writing this Epistle. In ver. 9. he says, "I *was* alive without the law once;" and then afterwards, in ver. 14. he says, "The law is spiritual, but I *am* carnal:" and so he proceeds to the very end

[e] Rom. vi. 6, 7, 11, 14, 18.
[f] ver. 15, 22.
[g] 1 Cor. ii. 14.
[h] Rom. viii. 7.
[i] 1 Cor. iv. 6.
[k] ver. 7—11.

end of the chapter declaring fully and particularly all the workings of his mind. This change of the tense shews clearly, that from stating his *former* experience he proceeds to state that which he felt at *present*. Moreover, in the concluding verse of the chapter, where he sums up, as it were, the substance of his confession in few words, he particularly declares, that he spake it of *himself*: "So then with the mind *I myself* serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin[l]." And this is yet further evident from what he adds at the beginning of the next chapter, where he says, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made *me* free from the law of sin and death[m]."

The only thing that can raise a doubt whether the Apostle speaks in his own person or not, is the strong language which he uses. It is certainly strong language to say of himself, "I am carnal, sold under sin." But this differs as widely from what is said of Ahab, who "*sold himself* to work iniquity," as the motion of a volunteer is from the motion of a person who is dragged in chains. To understand the Apostle, we must consider the subject on which he is writing. He is comparing himself with the spiritual and perfect law of God. To fulfil that in its utmost extent, was his continual aim: but by reason of his in-dwelling corruption he could not attain his aim: and this may well account for the strong terms in which he speaks of his corrupt nature. And, if we compare his language with that which the holiest men that ever existed have used in reference to themselves, we shall find that there is a perfect agreement between them. "Behold I am vile!" says Job; "I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes." David also complains, "My soul cleaveth to the dust." And the prophet Isaiah, on being favoured with a vision of the Deity himself, exclaimed, "Woe is me, I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips." And it is a fact, that the most eminent saints in every age have felt a suitableness in the language of St. Paul to express their own experience, just as they have also in those expressions of our Liturgy, "We are tied and bound with the chain of our sins; but do thou, O Lord, of the pitifulness of thy great mercy, loose us!"]

Having shewn that the passage relates the Apostle's own experience, we will proceed to shew,

II. Its true import—

The

[l] To interpret αὐτὸς ἐγὼ, "I the same man," i. e. not I *myself*, but I *that other person*, is such a perversion of language as cannot with any propriety be admitted.

[m] Rom. viii. 2.

The Apostle is speaking of that corrupt principle, which, notwithstanding his attainments, still remained within him, and kept him from that perfect conformity to the law of God to which he aspired. This principle he represents as having the force of a law, which he was not able fully to resist. He had indeed within himself a principle of grace which kept him from ever yielding a willing obedience to his indwelling corruption; but it did not so free him from the workings of corruption, but that he still offended God in many things;

1. In a way of occasional aberration—

[To conceive aright of this subject, we may suppose the holy and perfect law of God to be a perfectly straight line on which we are to walk; and the corrupt principle within us to be operating on all our faculties to turn us from it. Sometimes it blinds the understanding, so that we do not distinctly see the line; sometimes it biasses the judgment, so as to incline us, without any distinct consciousness on our part, to smaller deviations from it: sometimes with force and violence it impels the passions, so that we cannot regulate our steps with perfect self-command: and sometimes it operates to delude the conscience, and to make us confident that we see the line, when in reality it is only a semblance of it, which our great adversary has presented to our imagination in order to deceive us. By this principle a continual warfare was kept up in his soul against his higher and better principle, keeping him from what was good, and impelling him to do what was evil; so that he often did what he would not willingly have done, and did not what he would gladly have done. Thus, as he expresses it, there was "a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin in his members." This representation exactly accords with that which he gives of every Child of God, in the Epistle to the Galatians: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would[n]."

This is by no means to be understood as though he acknowledged that he was driven to any gross violations of God's law; for with respect to them he had a conscience void of offence: but in respect of smaller deviations from the exact line of duty, he could not assert his innocence: he felt, that

[n] Gal v. 17.

that however much he longed for perfection, "he had not yet attained, nor was he already perfect."]

2. In a way of constant defect—

[The law of God requires that we should love God with *all* our heart, and *all* our mind, and *all* our soul, and *all* our strength; and that *every* action, *every* word, *every* thought, be in perfect accordance with this rule. But who has not reason to confess that his very best duties are defective, in *extent*, *intensity*, and *continuance*? Who comprehends in any one action *all* that assemblage of nicely-balanced motives, and purposes, and affections, that were combined in the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ? Who at any time feels *all* that ardour in the service of his God which the angels in heaven feel? Or, supposing he did at some highly-favoured season serve God on earth precisely as the glorified saints are serving him in heaven, who must not confess that it is not *always* thus with him? However "willing his spirit may be, he will find that his flesh is weak." Indeed, in proportion as any man aspires after perfection, he will lament his imperfections; and in proportion as he sees the beauty of holiness, he will lothe himself for his defects: and we doubt not but that St. Paul's spirituality of mind led him to complain more bitterly of the defects, which, with all his exertions, he was not able to prevent, than he would have done in his unconverted state of more plain and palpable transgressions. It might be supposed that the more holy any man was, the more free he would be from such complaints: but the very reverse of this is true: the persons "who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, are they who groan most within themselves for their complete redemption[o];" yea Paul himself, as long as he was in the body, did "groan, being burthened[p]:" to his dying hour he resumed at times that piteous moan, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me[q]?"

St. Paul indeed makes a wide distinction between these sins of infirmity, and wilful sins. Of these he twice says, "If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me[r];" that is, My new nature in no respects consents to these sins; nay, the full bent and purpose of my soul is against them; but the remainder of my in-dwelling corruption, which I hate and oppose to the uttermost, keeps me from attaining that full perfection that I pant after: and therefore I hope that God will accept my services, notwithstanding the imperfection that attends them. In like manner, we, if we have the testimony of our consciences that we *allow* no

[o] Rom. viii. 23.
[p] 2 Cor. v. 2, 4.
[q] ver. 24.
[r] Compare ver. 17, 20.

no sin, but fight against it *universally*, and with all our might, may rest assured, that "God will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss," but that our services, notwithstanding their imperfection, shall come up with acceptance before him.]

In considering this experience of the Apostle, we must especially attend to,

III. The improvement to be made of it—

We may learn from it,

1. How constantly we need the atonement and intercession of Christ—

[It is not for the sins only of our unconverted state that we need a Saviour, but for those of daily incursion, even for those which attend our very best services. As Aaron of old was to bear the iniquity of the people of Israel, even of "their holy things[s]," so our great High Priest must bear ours: nor can the best service we ever offered unto God be accepted of him, till it has been washed in his blood, and perfumed with the incense of his intercession[t]. Guard then against all conceit of *meriting* any thing at the hands of God: guard also against self-complacency, as though you had wrought some good work in which no flaw can be found. If God were to lay a line and plummet to your best deeds, there would be found inconceivable obliquities and defects in them[u]. Be sensible of this, and then you will learn how to value the pearl of great price, even the Lord Jesus Christ, for whom you will gladly part with all that you have, that you may obtain an interest in him and in his salvation.]

2. What reason we have to watch over our own hearts—

[Carrying about with us such a corrupt nature, and knowing, as we do, that even St. Paul himself could not altogether cast off its influence, how jealous should we be, lest we be led into the commission of iniquity, even whilst we are thinking that we are doing God service! Even the Apostles of our Lord, on more occasions than one, "knew not what spirit they were of:" and we, if we will look back on many transactions of our former lives, shall view them very differently from what we once did: and no doubt God at this moment forms a very different estimate of us from what we are disposed to form of ourselves. How blinded men are by pride, or prejudice, or interest, or passion, we all see in those around

[s] Exod. xxviii. 38. [t] 1 Pet. ii. 5.
[u] Isai. xxviii. 17. Ps. cxxx. 3.

around us. Let us be aware of it in ourselves: let us remember, that we too have a subtle adversary, and a deceitful heart: let us never forget, that Satan, who beguiled Eve in Paradise, can now "transform himself into an angel of light" to deceive us, and to "corrupt us from the simplicity that is in Christ." Let us pray earnestly to God to keep us from his wiles, to disappoint his devices, and to bruise him under our feet. If God keep us, we shall stand; but, if he withdraw his gracious influences for one moment, we shall fall.]

3. What comfort is provided for us, if only we are upright before God—

[If we wish to make the Apostle's experience a cloke for our sins, we shall eternally ruin our own souls. His experience can be of no comfort to us, unless we have the testimony of our own consciences that we "hate evil," of whatsoever kind it be, and "delight in the law of God," even in its most refined and elevated requirements, "after our inward man." But, if we can appeal to God, that we do not regard or retain willingly any iniquity in our hearts, but that we unfeignedly endeavour to pluck out the right eye that offends our God, then may we take comfort in our severest conflicts. We may console ourselves with the thought that "no temptation has taken us but what is common to man," and that "God will, with the temptation, make for us also a way to escape." We may go on with confidence, assured of final victory; and may look forward with delight to that blessed day when sin and sorrow shall depart from us, and death itself be swallowed up in everlasting victory.]

DCCCCXXI.

CHRIST THE AUTHOR OF OUR SANCTIFICATION.

Rom. viii. 3, 4. *What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

THE necessity of holiness is allowed by all: the means of attaining it are known to few. Christ is regarded as the meritorious cause of our justification before God; but he is not sufficiently viewed as the instrumental cause of our deliverance from sin. He is represented in the Scriptures as "our sanctification,"

tion," no less than "our wisdom and our righteousness[a]:" and we should do well to direct our attention to him more in that view. In the preceding context he is spoken of as delivering his people from condemnation, and many judicious Commentators understand the text as referring to the same point: yet, on the whole, it appears more agreeable both to the words of the text, and to the scope of the passage, to understand it in reference to the work of sanctification[b]. St. Paul had just said that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," that is the Gospel, "had made him free from the law of sin, as well as of death." He then adds, that on account of the insufficiency of the law to condemn and destroy sin, God had sent his own Son to effect it; and that through his incarnation and death its power should be effectually broken.

From this view of the text, we are led to consider,

I. The end and design of Christ's Mission—

God's desire and purpose was to restore his people to true holiness—

[Sin was the object of his utter abhorrence: it had marred the whole creation; it had entered into heaven itself, and defiled the mansions of the Most High: it had desolated the earth also, and all that dwelt upon it. To remedy the miseries introduced by it, and to root it out from his people's hearts, was a design worthy of the Deity; since, if once they could be brought to "fulfil the righteousness of the law," by walking, in their habitual course of life, no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit, eternal honour would accrue to him, and everlasting happiness to them.]

The law was not sufficient to effect this—

[The law was indeed perfectly sufficient to direct man, while he remained in innocence: and it was well adapted to reclaim him when he had fallen; because it denounced the wrath of God against every transgression of its precepts, and set forth a perfect rule of duty. But "it was weak through the flesh:" man was deaf, and could not hear its threatenings; dead, and could not execute its commands. Hence, as to any practical effects, it spake in vain.]

God

[a] 1 Cor. i. 30.

[b] See Doddridge on the place.

God therefore, in order that his purpose might not fail, sent his only dear Son—

[He sent his co-equal, co-eternal Son, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," and to be a sacrifice "for sin[c];" that, through his obedience unto death, he might "deliver those who had been, and must for ever have continued, subject to bondage." How this expedient was to succeed, will come under our consideration presently: we therefore only observe at present, that it was a plan which nothing but infinite Wisdom could have devised. *It could not have entered into the mind of any finite Being, to subject God's only dear Son to such humiliation; to make him a partaker of our nature, with all its sinless infirmities; to substitute him in our place, and, by his vicarious sacrifice, to restore us to the image and favour of God: this does, and must for ever, surpass all finite comprehension.*]

But though we cannot fathom all the depths of this mystery, we may shew,

II. In what way it is effectual for the end proposed—

We speak not of the way in which the death of Christ obtains our justification, but of the way in which it is instrumental to our sanctification. In reference to this, we say,

1. It displays the evil and malignity of sin—

[The evil of sin had been seen in a measure by the miseries which it had introduced, and by the punishment denounced against it in the eternal world. But in what light did it appear, when nothing less than the incarnation and death of Christ was able to expiate its guilt or destroy its power! Let any person behold the agonies of Christ in the garden, or his dereliction and death upon the cross, and then go and think lightly of sin if he can. Surely if men were more habituated to look at sin in this view, they would be filled with indignation against it, and seek incessantly its utter destruction.]

2. It obtains for us power to subdue sin—

[Though man is in himself so weak that he cannot, of himself, even think a good thought, yet through the influence of the Holy Spirit he can "fulfil the righteousness of the law," not perfectly indeed, but so as to walk altogether in newness of life[d]. Now, by the death of Christ the promise of the Spirit is obtained for us; and all who seek his gracious influences,

[c] This is the meaning of περὶ ἁμαρτίας. See Heb. x. 6. & 2 Cor. v. 21.

[d] There is a two-fold fulfilling of the law mentioned in the Scriptures; the one *legal*, the other evangelical. Compare Matt. v. 17, with Rom. xiii. 8. & Gal. v. 14.

fluences, shall obtain them. Thus the axe is laid to the root of sin. "The weak is enabled to say, I am strong:" and he, who just before was in bondage to his lusts, now casts off the yoke, and "runs the way of God's commandments with an enlarged heart."]

3. It suggests motives sufficient to call forth our utmost exertions—

[The hope of heaven and the fear of hell are certainly very powerful motives; yet, of themselves, they never operate with sufficient force to produce a willing and unreserved obedience. While the mind is wrought upon by *merely* selfish principles, it will always grudge the price which it pays for future happiness. But let the soul be warmed with the love of Christ, and it will no longer measure out obedience with a parsimonious hand: it will be anxious to display its gratitude by every effort within its reach. "The love of Christ will constrain it" to put forth all its powers; to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts," and to "perfect holiness in the fear of God."]

INFER;

1. How vain is it to expect salvation while we live in sin!

[If we could have been saved *in* our sins, can it be conceived that God would ever have sent his own Son into the world to deliver us from them; or that, having sent his Son to accomplish this end, he would himself defeat it, by saving us in our iniquities? Let careless sinners well consider this: and let the professors of religion too, especially those in whom sin of any kind lives and reigns, lay it to heart: for if sin be not "condemned in our flesh," our bodies, and souls too, shall be condemned for ever.]

2. How foolish is it to attack sin in our own strength!

[A bowl, with whatever force it be sent, and however long it may proceed in a right direction, will follow at last the inclination of its bias, and deviate from the line in which it was first impelled. Thus it will be with us under the influence of legal principles: we shall certainly decline from the path of duty, when our corrupt propensities begin to exert their force. Our resolutions can never hold out against them. We must have a new bias; "a new heart must be given us, and a new spirit be put within us," if we would persevere unto the end. Let us not then expect to prevail by legal considerations, or legal endeavours. Let us indeed condemn sin in the purpose of our minds, and sentence it to death: but let us look to Christ

Christ for strength, and maintain the conflict in dependence on his power and grace. Then, though unable to do any thing of ourselves, we shall be enabled to "do all things."]

3. How are we indebted to God for sending his only Son into the world!

[If Christ had never come, we had remained for ever the bond-slaves of sin and Satan. We had still continued, like the fallen angels, without either inclination or ability to renew ourselves: whereas, through him, many of us can say, that we are "made free from the law of sin and death." Let us then trace our deliverance to its proper source; to the Father's love, the Saviour's merit, and the Spirit's influence. And let us with unfeigned gratitude adore that God, who "sent his Son to bless us, in turning away every one of us from our iniquities[e]."]

[e] Acts iii. 26.

DCCCCXXII.

VILENESS AND IMPOTENCY OF THE NATURAL MAN.

Rom. viii. 7, 8. *The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

TO those who know not what is in the heart of man, it must appear strange that persons not very dissimilar in their outward conduct should be adjudged to widely different states in the eternal world. But in the most imperfect of the regenerate, there is a predominant principle of love to God; whereas in the best of unregenerate men there is a rooted enmity against him: and this alone places their characters as far asunder as heaven and hell.

St. Paul has been speaking of the final issues to which a carnal and a spiritual mind will lead: and because it may seem unaccountable that the one should terminate in death, while the other is productive of eternal life and peace, he assigns the reason of it, and shews that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and that a person under its influence is incapable of rendering him any acceptable service.

In

In the Apostle's words there are three things to be considered,

I. His assertion—

The mind here spoken of, is that which actuates every unregenerate man—

[" The carnal mind" does not necessarily imply a disposition grossly sensual; it is (as it is explained in ver. 5) a savouring of earthly and carnal things in preference to things spiritual and heavenly. And this is the disposition that rules in the heart of every Child of man ———]

This " mind is enmity against God"—

[There is not one of God's perfections, to which this disposition is not adverse. It deems his holiness too strict, his justice too severe, his truth too inflexible; and even his mercy itself is hateful to them, on account of the humiliating way in which it is exercised. Even the very existence of God is so odious to them, that they say in their hearts, " I wish there were no God[a]." He did once put himself into their power; and they shewed what was the desire of their hearts by destroying his life; and, if they could have annihilated his very being, they would, no doubt, have gladly done it.

This mind is not merely inimical to God, for then it might be reconciled; but it is " enmity" itself against him, and must therefore be slain, before the soul can ever be brought to the service and enjoyment of God.]

This assertion, though strong, will not be thought too strong, when we consider,

II. His proof—

The carnal mind " is not subject to the law of God"—

[The law requires that we should love God supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves. But the carnal mind prefers the world before God, and self before his neighbour. There are different degrees indeed, in which a worldly and selfish spirit may prevail; but it has more or less the ascendant over every natural man; nor is there an unregenerate person in the universe who cordially and unreservedly submits to this law.]

It not only is not subject to God's law, but " it cannot be "—

[There is the same contrariety between the carnal mind and the law of God, as there is between darkness and light. It has been shewn before, that the carnal mind is enmity itself against

[a] Ps. xiv. 1.

against God; and that the very first principle of obedience to the law is *love*. Now how is it possible that enmity should produce love? "We may sooner expect to gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles."

This incapacity to obey the law of God is justly adduced as a proof of our enmity against him: for if we loved him, we should love his will; and if we hate his will, whatever we may pretend, we in reality hate him.]

A due consideration of the Apostle's argument will secure our assent to,

III. His inference—

[We cannot please God but by obeying his law. All external compliances are worthless in his eyes, if not accompanied with the love and devotion of the soul. But such obedience cannot be rendered by the carnal mind; and consequently they who are in the flesh, that is, are under the influence of a carnal mind, "cannot please God:" they may be admired by their fellow-creatures; but whatever they do will be an abomination in the sight of God.

This is so plain, that it scarcely admits of any confirmation: yet it may be confirmed by the Articles of our Church, which plainly and unequivocally speak the same language[b].]

On the whole then we may LEARN, from this subject,

1. The grounds and reasons of the Gospel—

[The principal doctrines of the Gospel have their foundation, not in any arbitrary appointment of the Deity, but in the nature and necessities of man. We must seek reconciliation with God through Christ, because we are "enemies to him in our minds by wicked works." We must seek the renewing influences of the Spirit, because our nature is altogether corrupt, and incapable of either serving or enjoying God. When therefore we hear of the indispensible necessity of being born again, and of the impossibility of being saved except by faith in Christ, let us remember that these are not the dogmas of a party, but doctrines consequent upon our fallen state, and therefore of universal and infinite importance; and that, if we were to be silent on these subjects, we should be unfaithful to our trust, and betray your souls to everlasting ruin.]

2. The suitableness and excellence of its provisions—

[If man were commanded to reconcile himself to God, or to renovate his own nature, he must sit down in despair. Darkness

[b] Art. 10th & 13th.

ness could as soon generate light, as fallen man could effect either of these things. But we are not left without hope: God has provided such a Saviour as we want, to mediate between him and us: and such an Agent as we want, to form us anew after the Divine image. Let us then embrace this Gospel, and seek to experience its blessings. Let us, as guilty creatures, implore remission through the blood of Jesus; and, as corrupt creatures, beg the Holy Spirit to work effectually in us, and to render us meet for a heavenly inheritance.]

DCCCCXXIII.

THE LEADINGS OF THE SPIRIT.

Rom. viii. 14. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

Though Christ's obedience unto death is the only meritorious ground of our salvation, yet it is certain that heaven is held forth to us as a prize which we are to attain by running, and as "a recompence of reward" which we are to gain by labour. Many shrink back at this idea, on account of the vast disproportion between the work and the reward: and well they may shrink back, if nothing be taken into the consideration but the intrinsic excellence of our works. But there is one point of view in which the disproportion will not appear so great, or perhaps will altogether vanish. We know that a poor man thinks himself liberally paid for his labour, if, after toiling a whole week, he receive a pound or two for his trouble: but the child of a Monarch would account himself very ill rewarded for such work, though he should be paid at a much higher rate. It is thus with respect to the point before us: if we be considered *as men*, the reward of eternal glory infinitely exceeds the labour of a few years of obedience: but, if we be considered *as Children of the living God, and as performing our works through the agency of his Spirit*, the recompence of heaven is no more than what is suited to our rank and dignity. This seems to be the idea of the Apostle in the text: he has observed, that "if through the the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live:"

live:" but, lest we should think it incredible that such a reward should follow a life of mortification, he assigns the reason of it; "*For* as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;" and consequently, they may expect a reward suited to their high character, and to the dignity of the Spirit who worketh in them.

In discoursing on these words, we shall shew,

I. Who they are that are led by the Spirit—

It is obvious and undeniable that *all* are not; and indeed the very text intimates that their number is limited to a part only of mankind. To distinguish accurately who these are, is a matter of some difficulty: for though we may easily shew, what the Spirit will lead us *from*, or what he will lead us *to*, we shall speak to no purpose, unless we take such discriminating marks as are found in none but true Christians. To make the matter as clear as possible,

1. We will propose some marks, which, though found in all true Christians, are insufficient to distinguish them—

[A person is not necessarily led by the Spirit, *because he follows the dictates of his natural conscience.* Every true Christian consults his conscience, and obeys its voice: but others may do so as well as he. Cornelius was evidently a conscientious man; but did not become a Christian till St. Peter set before him "words, whereby he and all his household should be saved[a]." If that instance be thought doubtful, we will adduce two others that admit of no doubt. The Rich Youth in the Gospel thought he had "kept all the commandments from his earliest youth:" and Paul, while he was a Jew, "had walked before God in all good conscience," and had been, "touching the righteousness of the law, blameless." But neither the one nor the other of these were led by the Spirit; the one renounced Christ rather than his riches[b]; and the other was converted only by a miraculous interposition of the Lord Jesus[c]. From hence it is evident that men may be honest, and upright, and conscientious, and yet have no just reason to conclude themselves Children of God.

Again, a person is not necessarily led by the Spirit *because he has experienced a change in his views and affections. Doubtless,* every Christian has experienced such a change: but

[a] Acts xi. 14. [b] Matt. xix. 20—22. [c] Acts ix. 1—6.

but the like is said of "the stony-ground hearers;" who not only received the word so as to inform their understanding, but so as to kindle in their hearts a lively joy[d]. Though therefore we may be moved under a sermon, and find as much pleasure in it as Ezekiel's hearers[e], yet this is no satisfactory evidence of our conversion to God.

Further, a person is not necessarily led by the Spirit, *because he makes an open profession of religion.* For though every true Christian will confess Christ openly, yet "the thorny-ground hearers" also do the same; and it is worthy of notice, that they are represented as never relinquishing their profession[f]. Though therefore we may openly join ourselves to the Lord's people, and be numbered amongst them by others, and bear reproach for our attachment to them, and bring forth fruit which resembles theirs, yet all this will be no decisive proof that we are led by the Spirit, or that we have any part in the Christian's salvation.]

2. We will propose some marks which will distinguish the true Christian from every other person under heaven—

[We may be sure that we are led by the Spirit, *if we come daily to Christ as perishing sinners.* No formalist or hypocrite can do this: he may talk about it, but he cannot do it: he has not that brokenness of heart, that contrition, that sense of his extreme need of mercy, which are necessary to bring him thus to Christ. There is in all unconverted persons an insuperable reluctance to come to him in such an humiliating way, a reluctance that nothing but an Almighty power can overcome. Our Lord himself says, "No man can come unto me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him[g]." If therefore we are daily coming to Christ with self-lothing and self-abhorrence, and building all our hopes of salvation on the merit of his blood, we can affirm, on the testimony of Christ himself, that we are of those who are under the leadings of his Spirit.

Another mark whereby this point may be ascertained, is *our being willing to receive Christ as our Lord and Governor.* The unregenerate, however desirous of being saved from misery, cannot be prevailed on cordially to submit to the yoke of Christ. The declaration of St. Paul is, that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost[h]." By this expression we must understand, not an incapacity to utter these words, but an incapacity to utter them cordially in reference to oneself. If therefore we be enabled cheerfully to sacrifice our own will, and if we seek unfeignedly to have "the very

[d] Matt. xiii. 20. [e] Ezek. xxxiii. 32. [f] Matt. xiii. 22.
[g] John vi. 44. [h] 1 Cor. xii. 3.

very thoughts of our hearts brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, we have another indisputable evidence that we are under the Spirit's influence and guidance.

A still further mark, which is also decisive on the point, is, *our mortifying of all sin without reserve.* The most specious hypocrite in the universe has some secret lust which he will not part with, and which he cannot, by any power of his own, subdue: "It is through the Spirit alone that we can mortify the deeds of the body[1]." If, then, there be no sin which we plead for; no sin, though dear as a right eye, or useful as a right hand, which we are not watching and labouring to destroy; it is evident, beyond all controversy, that we are led and strengthened by the Spirit of God.]

This point being ascertained, we proceed to notice,

II. The glorious state to which they are exalted—

It is almost incredible that sinners, like us, should ever become Children of the Most High God: yet is it certain, that all who are led by the Spirit of God, are exalted to this state—

1. They are *brought into the relation* of children—

[Once they were "children of wrath," and "children of the wicked one:" but now they are adopted into God's family, and numbered amongst his Children. Nor is it by adoption only that they stand thus related to him, but by regeneration also: for they are "begotten of God, even by the incorruptible seed, the word of God," and are made "partakers of a Divine nature." Once they regarded God only as a Governor and a Judge; but now they have "a spirit of adoption given to them, whereby they can call him, Abba, Father." What an unspeakable honour is this! If David thought it "no light matter to be called the son-in-law of such a king" as Saul, what is it to be called the sons of the Most High God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords!———]

2. They *enjoy all the privileges* of children—

[What are the privileges which are annexed to that relation among men? Think of them; comprehend them all; and they will fall infinitely short of those which it is your happiness to enjoy, both *in this world*, and *in the world to come.*

In this world you have every *temporal* blessing secured to you, to the utmost extent of your necessities, by the express promise of your heavenly Father. The children of men may say, of their respective possessions, This estate, or that kingdom, is mine: but of the Children of God it may be said, "All things are yours." As far as it can conduce to your real happiness, the

[1] ver. 13.

the whole world is yours, yea, all things, whether present or future[k]. As for *spiritual* blessings, there is nothing which the Lord Jesus Christ himself enjoyed when on earth, that is not made over to you also. You may have constant access to your Father's presence; you may ask of him whatever you will; you shall have his continual guidance in difficulties, support in trials, and consolation in troubles: every thing shall be ordered and over-ruled for your good; and you shall be carried on through all your destined labours, till you can say, "It is finished." Of none but God's children can this be said; but of them it may be said without one single exception.

You may carry your views yet farther, even to *the world to come;* and there also shall your happiness extend. There is reserved for all the Lord's children "an inheritance, which is incorruptible and undefiled, and never-fading." If we are children, then are we heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Think then of all that God the Father has in heaven to bestow; think of all that the Lord Jesus Christ, as your living Head, now enjoys there; and you will then have some faint idea of the inheritance reserved for you. Amongst men, if an eldest son should inherit all his father's property, the rest of the family would be unprovided for: but in heaven it is not so: every one has all that he could have, though there should be none but himself to possess the inheritance. Even here every man has all the light of the sun, notwithstanding millions of his fellow-creatures enjoy it together with him: and in like manner in heaven, all the glory and felicity of it is the portion of every saint around the throne of God.

Are you then really under the leadings of the Holy Spirit? Rejoice and adore your God, who has called you into so near a relation to him, and invested you with honours higher than even the highest archangel is privileged to possess.]

From this subject we may further LEARN,

1. The importance of discovering by what spirit we are led—

[Many are not led by the Spirit of God, but by the spirit of the world; which, as St. Paul tells us[l], and as experience too fatally proves, is contrary to the Spirit of God in all its actings. What spirit, I would ask, is that which leads the young into all manner of pleasure and gaiety; and causes those of middle age to be so immersed in cares, as scarcely to leave them a single hour to serve their God? What spirit is that which even in advanced life engages the thoughts and affections still on the side of the world, when time has worn away almost all capacity to enjoy it? Yet this is the spirit by which the generality are actuated to their dying hour.

But

[k] 1 Cor. iii. 21—23. [l] 1 Cor. ii. 12.

But even where religion appears to occupy the mind, many, alas! are led only by their own spirit. The very manner in which they speak and act shews that pride and conceit and vanity are the predominant dispositions of their hearts. They have a zeal perhaps for some favourite tenets, or for their own particular party; but they want the humility, the meekness, and the love which are the distinguishing features of all who are born of God.

It is not easy for persons to discern what spirit they themselves are of, even when all around them see how awfully they are deluded. But it concerns us all to examine carefully our own hearts and ways, that we may not deceive our own souls: for, whatever we may imagine, they only are Children of God, who bear the image of their Father; and they who fulfil the will of Satan, are, as God himself testifies, the Children of the wicked one[m]. Surely we should guard against so fatal a delusion as this, lest, when we enter into the eternal world, expecting to behold the face of our God in peace, we meet only an accusing God, and an avenging Judge.]

2. The importance of honouring him whose motions we profess to follow—

[In professing, to be led by the Spirit of God, you claim, of course, the honour of being the Children of God. And if you claim this honour, O think what manner of conversation yours should be; how holy, how spiritual, how heavenly! It should not be thought sufficient to maintain what may be called a blameless conduct; you should shine as lights in the midst of a dark world[n], and "walk worthy of him who hath called you to his kingdom and glory." Would you see the particulars wherein such conduct consists? read it in that direction which St. Paul gives to the Colossian Church[o]; "Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." Here is living Christianity: this is to walk as Christ walked: and by this shall all men know that ye are the disciples of Christ, "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty."]

[m] John viii 44. & 1 John iii. 10. [n] Phil. ii. 15, 16.
[o] Col. iii. 12—14.

DCCCCXXIV.

THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE AND OF ADOPTION.

Rom. viii. 15. *Ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

OUR blessed Lord in his last discourse with his Disciples promised to send down from heaven the Holy Spirit, who should "convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment:" and accordingly, on the day of Pentecost he did send down the Holy Spirit, who instantly wrought in the most powerful manner on the minds of thousands, filling them with the deepest convictions, and with the richest consolations. From that time the Holy Spirit has continued so to work on the minds of men, in some as a spirit of bondage, and in others as a Spirit of adoption. The *nature* of the Holy Spirit's operations is the same in both cases; their use and tendency being to bring men to God: the difference which is found in the *effects*, is occasioned by the state of the persons on whom the Spirit works: in those whose minds are yet blinded by Satan, and enslaved by sin, he produces only bondage and fear: but those who are deeply penitent, and unfeignedly desirous of fulfilling the word of God, he introduces into a state of light and liberty and joy.

Corresponding with these different states of men was the difference between the Jewish and the Christian dispensations; the one of which was intended to introduce the other: and it was good, *as far as it answered that end:* but, as an ultimate state to rest in, it was bad: it consisted only of "weak and beggarly elements," and imposed an insupportable yoke, from which it is our happy privilege to be released. It is in reference to that dispensation chiefly that the Apostle uses the word "*again*;" because the Jewish converts at Rome had, previous to their embracing of Christianity, groaned under that yoke: but the others also, in their Heathen state, had experienced a bondage not very dissimilar; and therefore the same expression may not improperly be applied to them also.

That

That we may have a distinct view of the whole of the Spirit's operations, we shall consider them,

I. In reference to the dispensation under which we live—

The Christian dispensation, as contrasted with the Jewish, is called "The ministration of the Spirit[a]," because under that dispensation the Spirit is poured forth far more abundantly than before.

The Jewish economy tended only to bondage—

[*The* terrific *manner in which the law was given*, generated nothing but fear in all who heard it: even Moses himself said on the occasion, "I exceedingly fear and quake." And the strict prohibition to all the people not so much as to touch the border of the Mount, clearly shewed to them that it was not a dispensation whereby they were ever to obtain a near access to God.

The two *tables of the Law*, which were then given to Moses, were so holy, that though *in the letter* they might be observed, *in the spirit* they could not be kept by any Child of man: and yet they were enforced with the most awful sanctions, the smallest violation of any one command subjecting the offender to death, even eternal death. What but fear could result from such a dispensation as this?

The very *sacrifices* prescribed for the relief of those consciences which were oppressed with guilt, tended, in fact, to confirm, rather than relieve, the bondage of their minds. For how could they imagine that "the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin?" Hence "the offerers were never made perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;" and the annual repetition of the same sacrifices confirmed their apprehensions, that their sins, so imperfectly atoned for, were not effectually removed. The sacrifices were to them only "a remembrance of sins from year to year[b]." Moreover, the people in their own persons could not approach unto their God: they must deliver their offerings to the priests and Levites: nay, not even the priests could enter within the veil, nor even the high priest himself, except on one day in the year, and then only in the precise manner that was prescribed to him. In all this, the Holy Ghost, who even under that dispensation was not altogether withheld from men, "signified to the Jewish nation that the way into the Holy of Holies was not yet manifest[c]."

Even *the promises* that were given for their encouragement were, for the most part, only such as were calculated to work upon an earthly mind, and in no respect to bring them to a state

[a] 2 Cor. iii. 8. [b] Heb. x. 1—4. [c] Heb. ix. 6—8.

state of peace and joy. Hence, except those few favoured saints who had an insight into the Gospel, and were enabled to look through the shadows of the law to Christ as the substance of them, all were in bondage, serving God from fear, rather than from love; and rendering to him rather the reluctant services of the body, than the willing devotion of the soul.]

The Christian dispensation, on the contrary, tends to produce in us a happy childlike disposition—

[*The new covenant*, which it holds forth to us, offers life and salvation on far different terms than were prescribed by the old covenant. The old covenant said, "Do this and live:" the new covenant says, "Believe and be saved[d]." The Gospel reveals unto us *sacrifice*, that is, "a propitiation for the sins of the whole world; and offers us *a Saviour*, who is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Under this dispensation every one is privileged to enjoy *the most intimate access to God*, to "come with boldness into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, to draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having his heart altogether sprinkled and purged from an evil conscience[e]." Further, these rich blessings are revealed to us as the fruits of *God's everlasting love*, no less than as the purchase of the Redeemer's blood; and to the blessings of time are added all the glory and felicity of heaven, as the assured portion of all God's chosen people.

But, besides this clearer revelation of God's grace and mercy, there is a manifestation of it made to the souls of the faithful by the Spirit of God, who "sheds abroad in their hearts the love of God" the Father, and "takes of the things that are Christ's to shew unto them," and by his own sanctifying operations "delivers them from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the Children of God."]

With this contrasted view of the two dispensations agree the express declarations of God himself—

[The nature of the two dispensations is thus distinctly marked by a very striking allegory; in which *the Spirit generated* in those who were *under them* is contrasted by that of a servant and a child[f]: moreover, *the transition from the one to the other* is illustrated by the very same images as have been already noticed[g]; and *the final issue of our adherence to the one or to the other* is declared to be precisely such as might be expected;—to the servant, banishment; and to the son, an everlasting inheritance[h].]

But,

[d] Rom. x. 5—9. [e] Heb. x. 19—22. [f] Gal. iv. 1—6.
[g] Heb. xii. 18—24. [h] Gal. iv. 24, 25, 30.

But, to enter fully into the subject, we must consider it,

II. In reference to the experience of individual Believers, the Holy Spirit strives in a greater or less degree with all—

In the unconverted, he works as "a spirit of bondage"—

[He is the true Author of every good desire. The least disposition towards what is good is as much his work as the most spiritual exercises of God's dearest children. His operation therefore must be traced as well in the hearts of the unconverted, as of the converted. In the commencement, he operates in a way of *legal hopes:* in the progress, he impels to *slavish fears:* and, with those who are not the subjects of saving grace, he terminates his operations by instigating to *self-righteous endeavours.* A person first beginning to think about his soul, (for which thought he is wholly indebted to the Spirit of God,) is desirous of putting the most favourable construction on all his former ways, and of dissipating all apprehensions about his eternal state. Hence he persuades himself, that he has never committed any great sins; or, if he has, that they were committed under such circumstances as greatly to palliate their guilt: that, at all events, God is too merciful ever to visit his offences with such a terrible punishment as the Scriptures speak of: and that his good deeds, which he either has performed or hopes to perform, will counterbalance all the evil he has done. By degrees his mind becomes more enlightened, and he sees that his sins have been neither so few nor so venial as he had imagined. And now his *legal hopes* vanish, and are succeeded by *slavish fears.* The declarations of God respecting the final condemnation of the wicked are credited by him; and his claims of innocence or good desert are seen to be destitute of any solid foundation. Now the thoughts of death and judgment are terrible to him; and, as St. Paul says, He, "through fear of death, is all his life-time subject to bondage." To such an extent do "these terrors of the Lord" operate on many, that they hate their very existence, and would gladly surrender it up, if they could but perish like the beasts, and never be called to any future account. These apprehensions lead, as may be expected, to *self-righteous endeavours.* The person who is under their influence, sets himself to read, and pray, and attend the ordinances: he dispenses alms to the poor; he renounces many practices which he once justified, and performs many duties which he once neglected; hoping, if possible, to make up for all the time that he has lost, and to conciliate the favour of his offended God. As his light increases,

increases, and the insufficiency of human merit is discovered by him, he looks to the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, to atone for his faults, and to supply his defects. Perhaps in time the folly of depending on human righteousness is seen by him; and he is willing to seek for salvation through Christ, provided he may but recommend himself to Christ by some obedience of his own, and have in himself the warrant for embracing the Saviour, and for expecting his salvation. Thus he founds his hopes, if not entirely, yet in some measure, on his own good works; and though doing well, as far as respects the ardour of his exertions, he fatally errs in making *self* the ground of his dependence, and perishes for want of a better righteousness than his own. This was the progress of the Spirit's work in the unconverted Jews[i]; and such it is also in thousands at the present day.]

In those who are converted, he works as a Spirit of adoption—

[To these he imparts sublimer gifts, enabling them to look up with confidence to God, "crying, Abba, Father." He gives them an *assured testimony of their acceptance* with God as a reconciled God and Father; setting, as it were, upon their hearts the Father's seal[k], and witnessing with their spirits that they are the Children of God[l]. Thus, drawing them by his gracious influences, he brings them into *a state of holy "fellowship* with the Father and the Son," causing them to walk with God as dear children, and to live habitually as in his presence; they "dwelling in God, and God in them;" yea, being "one with God, and God with them." As brought into the family of God, they now, through the power of that same blessed Spirit, live in *a humble dependence* upon God for all that they stand in need of, for body and for soul, for time and for eternity. "All their care is cast on Him who careth for them;" and the life which they live in the flesh they live by the faith of the Son of God, "receiving every thing out of his fulness," in the time and measure that infinite Wisdom seeth best for them. Nor are these heavenly gifts uninfluential on their conduct. They now walk in the *habit of grateful obedience* to God, desiring and striving to be "perfect, even as their Father which is in heaven is perfect." They serve their God no longer from fear, as slaves, but from love, as obedient children, whose ambition it is to do their Father's will on earth, as it is done in heaven. Elevated thus, and sanctified by the Spirit's influence, they are filled with *a joyful expectation* of dwelling speedily, and to all eternity, in the immediate presence of that Saviour, "whom unseen they loved, and in whom even here they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory." They "look

[i] Rom. ix. 31, 32. [k] 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. [l] ver. 16.

"look for, and haste unto, the coming of that blessed day," when they shall behold him face to face: the time seems long till they shall enjoy that bliss; and, with a holy impatience, they are ready to cry, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly." They know that, as children, they are heirs: they have already, in the consolations of the Spirit, had "an earnest of their inheritance;" and they long for the full possession of it, "desiring to depart, that they may be with Christ." Thus does the Spirit work, though certainly in different degrees, on all the Children of God, inspiring *them* with *filial joys*, as he fills the *unregenerate* with *slavish fears*.]

In conclusion, we would intreat all of you to INQUIRE, What Spirit you have received?

1. Have you received the Spirit of God *at all?*

[Many, alas! have scarcely so much as "heard whether there be any Holy Ghost:" or, if they have, they regard all idea of his agency upon the soul as visionary and delusive. But let such persons know, that they are altogether dead in trespasses and sins. If the Spirit of God have not so far wrought upon our minds as to convince us of our lost estate, we have not as yet taken one single step towards heaven. The declaration of St. Paul in the preceding context is, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."]

2. Have you received the Spirit as a Spirit of bondage?

[*Despise it not:* the fears and terrors with which he has filled your minds, may be introductory to your final liberty, and your complete salvation. It is thus that the Spirit usually, if not invariably, works in those who are "translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son." He first wounds, and then heals, the soul: he "convinces us first of sin," and then "of righteousness and of judgment:" he makes us feel ourselves lost, and makes use of that feeling to lead us to Him who came into the world to seek and save us. "Despise not then the day of small things:" for "then shall you know if you follow on to know the Lord."

On the other hand, we must say, *Do not rest in it.* The spirit of bondage will generate fear; but it will not produce either love or holiness, both of which are necessary to your everlasting salvation. If we have no better principle than slavish fear to make us obedient to our God, what are we better than the Heathen? The Christian must regard God, not merely as a Judge, but as a Father. He must obey, not through fear of the lash, but from a real love to his name, and an unfeigned delight in his holy will. The truth, if it enter into

into our hearts, will make us free: and it will "deliver us from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the Children of God."]

3. Have you received the Spirit *as a Spirit of adoption?*

[Then *be thankful for it*, and adore your God for the exceeding riches of his grace towards you. But *take care that you do not deceive your own souls respecting it.* It is possible to mistake in this matter, and to refer to God's agency the delusions of Satan and of your own hearts. Many indulge a very unhallowed confidence in God. But, though it is our privilege to put away *slavish* fear, it is our duty to cherish to the uttermost a *filial* fear of offending God. We must "walk in the fear of the Lord all the day long." If we are on our guard in this particular, then our confidence cannot be too strong; since there is nothing which a loving father can bestow on his obedient child, which our God will not confer on us. Know then your privilege, and rejoice in it; and with all the confidence which the repetition of the word implies, go into the presence of your God from time to time, crying "Abba, Father." But *take care that you do not lose it.* Take care that you "grieve not the Holy Spirit of promise, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption[m]." Watch over your every action, word, and thought; endeavouring to walk "as obedient children," yea, "as dear children," worthy of the relation in which you stand to God; "being holy, as He who hath called you is holy[n]."]

[m] Eph. iv. 30. [n] 1 Pet. i. 14, 15.

DCCCCXXV.

THE PRIVILEGES OF GOD'S CHILDREN.

Rom. viii. 17. *If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

THERE are many high-sounding titles among men, which are no otherwise profitable to the possessors of them, than as they please their fancy, and gratify their pride. But the honourable appellations given to the true Christian, are connected with real and substantial benefits, which every one who is counted worthy of them shall infallibly enjoy. Believers are called in Scripture, "Children of God." Now

Now this name is not a mere Hebraism, or figure of speech peculiar to Scripture: for though it is true that the Scriptures speak of children of promise, children of disobedience, children of the curse, importing only that the persons so called are of such or such a character; yet the term "Children of God" is of a more determinate meaning: it imports a relation to God as a Father; and includes all that is comprehended in that relation. Hence the Apostle, having spoken of Believers under this term, immediately draws this inference from it; "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

In considering these words, we shall set before you,

I. The privileges of Believers—

It is here taken for granted, that Believers are Children of God: we therefore pass over that, and notice only the privileges attached to that relation. And here we find them,

1. Briefly stated—

[We know what is usually understood by the term "heir." An heir is one who has a title to an estate, not as having earned or merited it, but simply by right of primogeniture. He comes to the full possession of it as soon as he is of age; and in the mean time he is supported out of it agreeably to the rank of life he is hereafter to sustain.

Now from hence we may see what is implied in the term, when applied to the Children of God. They have a claim to heaven itself as their inheritance[a]. But their right does not at all arise from any thing they have done to deserve or purchase it: it is founded solely on their having been born of God through the operations of the Holy Spirit upon their souls[b]. They come to the full possession of it at the time appointed of the Father: but, while they continue minors, they are educated, and maintained, in a manner suited to their high and heavenly birth: they have the Holy Ghost himself for their teacher[c]; they have manna from heaven, even "angels' food," for their support[d]; they have the garments of salvation for their clothing[e]; and angels for their attendants to minister unto them[f].

In some respects indeed the parallel does not hold: for, amongst

[a] 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.
[b] John i. 13.
[c] 1 John ii. 27.
[d] John vi. 53—55. Ps. lxxviii. 25.
[e] Isai. lxi. 10.
[f] Heb. i. 14.

amongst men, the eldest only is the heir, and the younger have smaller portions allotted to them: but, of the Children of God, every one has an equal right to the whole inheritance. Besides, the heirs of men may die, or be defrauded of their inheritance: but the Children of God have their inheritance reserved for them; and they are kept for it[g]. Moreover, the heirs of men retain their possessions but a little time, and lose them entirely at death: but the Children of God come to the full enjoyment of their inheritance, when they die; and then possess it for ever and ever.]

2. Strongly amplified—

[When the Apostle says, "heirs; heirs of God," he does not intend merely to repeat the idea, but to enlarge and amplify it by a very important addition. The children of men, though denominated heirs of such or such a person, can only inherit the substance belonging to that person: but the Children of God inherit all that God *has*, and, if we may so speak, all that he *is*. To them belong "*all things*," whether present or future, whether temporal or eternal[h]. To them belong also all the perfections of the Deity, so far at least as they need to have them exercised for their good in this world, and for their happiness in the next: they can say with David, "The Lord himself is the portion of mine inheritance[i]."

Further light is thrown upon this subject by the additional expression, "joint-heirs with Christ." Christ is the Lord and "Heir of all things[k]." But "he is not ashamed to call us brethren[l]." By virtue of this relation to him, we are partakers of all that he inherits. Has "his Father appointed unto him a kingdom? Such is appointed to us" also[m]. Has his Father called him to a throne? We also are seated on it together with him[n]. Does he, agreeably to his Father's will, possess a glory and felicity infinitely surpassing our highest conceptions? The same also is given to us for our everlasting portion[o].

But, whatever be the means of bringing us to the enjoyment of this portion, our right and title to it arises wholly from our relation to God the Father as his children; "*If children, then heirs;*" "if a son, *then* an heir of God through Christ[p]."]

We must not however forget,

II. The condition on which they are bestowed—

Though we are not required to do any thing in order to earn these privileges, or to render an equivalent

[g] 1 Pet. i. 4, 5. [h] 1 Cor. iii. 21—23. [i] Ps. xvi. 5.
[k] Heb. i. 2. [l] Heb. ii. 11. [m] Luke xxii. 29.
[n] Rev. iii. 21. [o] John xvii. 22. [p] Gal. iv 7.

valent for them when bestowed upon us, yet are conditions imposed upon us; and we must submit to those conditions, if ever we would participate the blessedness of God's children.

For the sake of perspicuity, we will shew,

1. What the condition is—

[Christ, our elder Brother, was a sufferer, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief[q]." In this respect all the family must resemble him: every one of them must learn obedience in the same way[r], and be perfected by the same means[s]. It is appointed to all the disciples of Jesus to "take up their cross, and follow him." They must expect the same treatment from an ungodly world as he experienced: they must be hated, reviled, persecuted: "the disciple cannot be above his Lord; it is sufficient for him to be as his Lord:" "if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, much more will they those of his household."

Now it is not easy for flesh and blood to endure these things: we are ever ready, through pride and anger, to resent such treatment; or, through shame and cowardice, to shun it. But the condition is plain and absolute, *No cross, no crown*: "We must suffer with him, if ever we would be glorified together."]

2. The equity of it—

[Our sufferings are intended *as a test of our love to Christ.* —There was no necessity for our blessed Lord to submit to sufferings, unless he chose to undertake our cause, and put himself in the place of sinners: yet, purely for our sakes, he endured even death itself, yea, the painful and accursed death of the cross. If our trials then were a thousand times more severe than they are, would it not become us cheerfully to sustain them in proof of our regard for him? If he voluntarily bore so much for our good, it is surely reasonable that we should, when called to it, endure somewhat for his glory.

But our sufferings are also intended *to secure to us, and augment the inheritance itself.* Nothing tends more to wean us from the world, than the opposition we meet from worldly men. Our "tribulation also worketh patience;" yea, it both exercises and confirms our every grace[t]. Strange as it may appear, the enduring of trials for Christ's sake tends greatly to the advancement even of our present happiness, inasmuch as it "turns to us for a testimony[u]," and puts honour upon us[x], and is, for the most part, attended with the richest consolations

[q] Isai. liii. 1. [r] Heb. v. 8. [s] Heb. ii. 10.
[t] Rom. v. 3, 4. [u] Luke xxi. 13. [x] Phil. xxi. 29. 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14.

solations of the Spirit[y]. And, beyond all doubt, it will hereafter be recompensed "with a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory[z]."

Can we then complain of a condition, which at once conduces to God's glory, and to our happiness? We should rather rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer in so good a cause[a]; and be contented to obtain the inheritance in the way which our heavenly Father has ordained[b].]

ADDRESS,

1. Those who are afraid of the cross—

[Hope not ever to alter the condition which God has imposed: *that* is absolutely irreversible[c]. Consider the time when our Lord imposed the condition; and blush for your timidity[d]. Consider how little it is in the power of man to do against you, and what a sad alternative you prefer[e]; and let your cowardice humble you in the dust. Think what a worm it is that you are afraid of, and what an omnipotent Being you displease[f]: and lastly, consider whether the inheritance will not abundantly repay all that you can endure in the way to it. Let such reflections as these occupy your minds. Count the cost at once, and learn to "sell all for this invaluable pearl[g]."]

2. The suffering Children of God—

[Think it not strange that ye meet with fiery trials[h]: you have often been forewarned respecting it[i]: and they are all working for your good[k]. If you were to suffer for evil-doing, there would be reason for shame: but to suffer for well-doing is honourable, and acceptable with God[l]. While the heir feels the restraints of his minority, he comforts himself with the prospect that he shall ere long be of age, and launch into the complete fruition of all his wishes. Your trials are, as it were, a needful discipline, to which you must submit for a little time: but soon they will for ever end, and all the felicity of heaven be yours. "Be patient therefore till the coming of your Lord[m];" consoling yourselves with that delightful promise, "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things[n]."]

[y] 2 Cor. i. 5.
[z] 2 Cor. iv. 17.
[a] Acts v. 41.
[b] 2 Tim. iii. 12. Acts xiv. 22.
[c] 2 Tim. ii. 12, 13.
[d] Matt. xvi. 21, 24. "*Then.*"
[e] Luke xii. 4, 5. Matt. xvi. 25.
[f] Isai. li. 7, 8, 12, 13.
[g] Matt. xiii. 44.
[h] 1 Pet. iv. 12.
[i] 1 Thess. iii. 4.
[k] 1 Pet. i. 7.
[l] 1 Pet. ii. 19, 20. & iv. 15, 16.
[m] Jam. v. 7, 10, 11.
[n] Rev. xxi. 7.

DCCCCXXVI.

THE OFFICE OF HOPE.

Rom. viii. 24, 25. *We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen, is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

IF it be asked, What is that feeling of the mind, which, beyond all others, gives life and activity to rational agents? we answer, It is *hope*. Influenced by this, all persons in every department of life put forth their energies: the merchant braves the storms; the soldier encounters his enemies; the student consumes the midnight oil in his laborious researches. To this also is chiefly to be referred the Christian's exertions in the service of his God. True it is, that love and gratitude have a constraining influence upon him: but it is also true, that these principles would be ineffectual to carry his soul through all its trials, if they were not confirmed and animated by the yet more powerful operation of hope. Great, no doubt, are the privileges and enjoyments of the Christian in this present world: he is a Child of the Most High God; and has "a spirit of adoption within him, enabling him to cry, Abba, Father." He has also "the witness of the Spirit testifying both in and by his own spirit, that he is a Child of God." But, after all, little solid comfort would he derive from these reflections, if he did not look forward to an inheritance, to which, by virtue of his relation to God, he was entitled. Hence the Apostle represents the Lord's people as deriving their chief consolation from the prospect which they have beyond the grave[a], yea, and "as being saved by hope," through the operation of which upon their minds "they patiently wait for" the termination and issue of all their present trials.

We propose on the present occasion to consider the *nature* and *effects* of the Christian's hope:

I. Its

[a] ver. 23.

I. Its nature—

We are most generally said to be saved by *faith*[b]: but here salvation is ascribed to *hope*. There is, in fact, a near affinity between the two: and we cannot adopt any better method of illustrating the nature and operations of hope than by instituting a comparison between it and faith. That faith and hope are very nearly allied, appears from this, that in St. Paul's account of Abraham, he represents the two principles as concurring with each other, and having an united influence on his obedience: "Against hope," says he, Abraham "believed in hope[c]."

In some things the two principles agree—

[They agree *in their origin:* both of them are the gift of God, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit's operation on the soul. Have we *faith?* it is the gift of God[d], the fruit of a divine operation[e], a work of grace[f]: and if we have *hope*, we have been begotten to it by God himself[g], even by his gracious influence on our souls[h]: and to his Holy Spirit must be ascribed all its increase in the soul, together with all the peace and joy that flow from it[i].

They agree also *in their use:* both the one and the other being intended to further the salvation of our souls. As we are saved by faith[k], so are we by hope also[l].

They agree yet further *in their duration:* they have no scope for exercise beyond this present life. Faith is by St. Paul opposed to sight[m]: and as in heaven "we shall see God face to face, and know him even as we are known," the dark and *enigmatical* visions of faith will cease[n]. In like manner we are told in our text, that "hope that is seen, is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" We shall have in heaven the actual possession of what is now the object of our hope. Then faith will be lost in sight, and hope in enjoyment.]

In other things the two principles materially differ—

[They differ *in their foundation.* Faith is founded solely on the veracity of God. Hope is founded, partly, on the word of God, and, partly, on our conformity to that word. The word of God reveals a dispensation of mercy to sinful man. But what hope does that generate in the minds of the fallen angels?

[b] Rom. v. 1. [c] Rom. iv 18. [d] Eph. ii. 8. Phil. i. 29.
[e] Col. ii. 12. [f] Acts xviii. 27. [g] 1 Pet. i. 3.
[h] 2 Thess. ii. 16. [i] Rom. xv. 13. [k] Rom. x. 9.
[l] The text.
[m] 2 Cor. v. 7.
[n] 1 Cor. xiii. 12. See the Greek.

angels? They believe it, as much as we do: but, having no evidence in themselves that they comply with the terms on which that mercy is vouchsafed, they do not hope in it: "they believe and tremble[o]." It is the penitent alone that has hope in God: and his hope arises from his consciousness, that he does embrace the mercy offered him, and conform to the terms which God in his wisdom has prescribed to all who shall ultimately be saved by it.

They differ also *in their qualities.* Faith is properly a virtue; and the want of it under all circumstances is a sin. As a virtue, there is no other so frequently or so highly commended; (where that has been exercised, humility, and love, and every other grace that has been exercised with it, has been overlooked, and *that alone* commended[p]:) and as a sin, no other is so strongly reprobated as unbelief[q]. Hope, on the other hand, may rather be called a privilege than a virtue; and despondency, a curse, rather than a sin. So far indeed as hope agrees with faith in its foundation, so far it agrees with it in its moral qualities: but as far as it is founded, not on the word of God, but in a man's own conformity to that word, so far its moral qualities differ from those of faith: for instead of its being a sin for an ungodly man to despair of salvation *in his present state,* it is a sin for him to indulge a hope: it is the vilest presumption in him to think that he can ever be saved in an impenitent and unbelieving state: and to despair of salvation *in such a state* is his very first step towards heaven.

They differ yet further *in their objects.* Faith is incomparably more extensive than hope. Faith has respect to both good and evil: it embraces in its view both heaven and hell: but hope has good alone for its object. Faith comprehends every thing that God has revealed, whether past, present, or future: hope looks only to what is future. Faith regards every declaration of God, whether historical or prophetic, promissory or menacing, hortatory or preceptive: but hope has respect to the promises alone. It invariably terminates on some good, which is yet future, and which God has promised.

Lastly, They differ also *in their offices.* Though both of them agree in their general use, to promote the salvation of men, they have exceedingly distinct offices. Faith apprehends the Lord Jesus Christ, and, by uniting us to him, interests us in all that he has done and suffered for us: it also receives out of his fulness all those graces and blessings which the Father has been pleased to treasure up in him for the benefit of his Church. Hope merely expects those blessings; and, by presenting future good to our view, stimulates us to diligence

[o] Jam. ii. 19. [p] Luke vii. 50. [q] Mark xvi. 16.

diligence in the pursuit of it. Both of these principles "*save* us;" but faith brings that good into the soul which hope had only anticipated; and, by presenting invisible realities to our view, gives to hope a more ample scope for exercise. Faith is the parent of hope: but hope, once formed in the soul, becomes an active helper to faith. Neither can operate to any good effect without the other. Faith without hope is paralysed; and hope without faith is dead: but, when faith duly apprehends Christ, and hope leads us to wait patiently for his full salvation, then the work of God goes on prosperously within us, and we are in the sure way to everlasting life.]

Such being the *nature* of the Christian's hope, we proceed to inquire into,

II. Its effects—

These are represented under the general term, Salvation; "We are saved by it." But *how* does it effect salvation for us? We answer, By it,

1. We are comforted in our afflictions—

[Afflictions are the lot of all, but especially of the Lord's people. All of them have a cross to bear; and tribulation is their appointed way to the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, so painful are the trials which they have to endure for the Lord's sake, that, "if in this life only they had hope, they would be of all men most miserable," or, at least, most to be pitied[r]. But the prospect of eternal glory so lightens their burthen, as to make it quite easy to be borne[s]. To this effect the Apostle speaks in the chapter before us; (and he delivers the sentiment as the result of his own most careful investigation:) "I reckon (I *compute* by accurate calculation) that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us[t]." In another epistle he gives a full and accurate description of his views and feelings on this subject. "He was continually delivered unto death for Jesus' sake:" but he was perfectly satisfied with his condition, because "he knew, that He who had raised up the Lord Jesus, would raise him up also by Jesus, and present him, together with his beloved converts[u]," "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy[x]." The prospect of that blessed event made all his "afflictions light," yea, lightness itself[y]. It may be thought, perhaps, that this super-abundant grace was given to him as an Apostle, and is not to be expected by us. But it is to be expected by every saint whom "God hath

[r] ἐλεεινότεροι, 1 Cor. xv. 19. [s] Acts xx. 24. [t] ver. 18.
[u] 2 Cor. iv. 11—14. [x] Jude 24.
[y] 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. See the Greek.

hath begotten to a lively hope:" for our blessed Lord tells all his followers, not merely to bear their persecutions with patience, but to make them a ground of joy and exultation, because of the glorious recompence that awaits them in the eternal world[z]. And who that has ever suffered much for righteousness' sake, has not found this to be the effect of his hope towards God? Many amongst us may say with David, "I should have fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living[a]." But under the influence of this hope their consolations have abounded in proportion to, yea, and far above, all their accumulated afflictions[b].]

2. We are supported in our conflicts—

[To all true Christians there are, on some occasions, "fightings without, and fears within." But the grace of which we are speaking, serves them as an helmet, that will resist the stroke of their most potent adversary. In the panoply of God, this piece of armour yields to none in point of efficacy and importance: salvation is pre-eminently ascribed to it: it is called, "The helmet of salvation[c]." It is well known, that persons clothed with armour from head to foot, especially if contending with persons not so protected, enter into the combat with peculiar confidence[d]. And thus especially does the Christian whose mind is well established by hope: he is "strong and very courageous," not doubting but that God is with him, and that he shall be "more than conqueror through Him that loved him." The assaults which he has to sustain may indeed be violent and very terrible, even like the waves of the sea, that threaten to overwhelm the tempest-tossed bark. But his hope, like an anchor sure and stedfast, enables him to out-ride the storm[e]." That "anchor cast within the veil," keeps his mind composed[f], and assures him, that he is safe, though earth and hell should combine their efforts to destroy him[g]. How this grace operated on the saints of old we may see at large in St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews. Many, under its influence, "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods[h]:" and many even of the weaker sex, when called to endure the severest torments that could be inflicted on them, "would not so much as accept the deliverance" that was offered them, because "they hoped assuredly to obtain a better resurrection[i]." Thus will it operate on us also. Precisely as the expectation of a future harvest leads the husbandman to encounter all difficulties,

[z] Matt. v. 10—12. [a] Ps. xxvii. 13. [b] 2 Cor. i. 5.
[c] 1 Thess. v. 8. with Eph. vi. 17.
[d] This was particularly observable in the French Cuirassiers at the battle of Waterloo.
[e] Heb. vi. 19. [f] Isai. xxvi. 3. [g] 2 Tim. i. 12.
[h] Heb. x. 34. [i] Heb. xi. 35.

ficulties, and cheers his mind during the long continuance of an inclement winter, so the prospect of reaping in due season enables the Christian to endure unto the end[k]. He has never seen the felicity which he pants after; but he expects assuredly the ultimate possession of it; and therefore "patiently waits for" the final consummation of all his hopes[l].]

3. We are encouraged in our exertions—

[To a man who has heaven in his eye, nothing is impossible. Behold Moses, when at the summit of human grandeur and power: an alternative was before him, "to suffer affliction with the people of God, or to enjoy the pleasures" and honours of the Court of Pharaoh: and which did he prefer? He chose "the reproach of Christ, esteeming it to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." And what guided him to this strange decision? it was hope; "he had respect unto the recompence of the reward[m]." In like manner St. Paul "pressed forward with incessant ardour in his heavenly course, forgetting what was behind, and reaching forward to what was before." And, if we inquire into the principle which animated him to such exertions, we shall find that it was precisely that which is mentioned in our text,—the hope and prospect of securing "the prize of his high calling." We may even say that our blessed Lord himself, as a man, was actuated by the same divine principle; since it was "for the joy that was set before him, that he endured the cross and despised the shame, and rested not till he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God[n]." And we too, if we would "run our race with patience," must imitate him in this respect[o]; we must keep our eye steadily fixed on him, and continue without intermission "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ[p]." Then shall we "be stedfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord," when we are convinced in our mind, "that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord[pp]."]

ADDRESS,

1. Those whose hopes are presumptuous—

[There is no man who does not hope that he shall be saved at last. But we ought to be "able to give a reason of the hope that is in us[q]." If we cannot do this, and a satisfactory reason too, our hope is altogether vain and delusive. We have before said, that hope, as well as faith, must, in part at least, be founded on the word of God. Look to it then, that your hope is truly Scriptural, and that you seek with all diligence

[k] Jam. v. 7, 8. [l] See the text. [m] Heb. xi. 24—26.
[n] Heb. xii. 2. [o] ib. ver. 1. [p] Tit. ii. 11—13.
[pp] 1 Cor. xv. 58. [q] 1 Pet. iii. 15.

gence that humility and contrition, that faith and love, that purity and holiness, that zeal and devotedness to God, which are the distinguishing characters of all who shall ultimately attain the kingdom of heaven. If you are "without Christ, you are without hope[r]:" but if you flee to him for refuge, you may be perfectly assured of acceptance with him[s].]

2. Those who are harassed with doubts and fears—

[There are many, of whom there is reason to hope well, who yet do not enjoy that comfort in their minds which the religion of Christ is calculated to impart. In some this disquietude arises from imperfect views of the Gospel: they do not see the freeness and fulness of that salvation that is provided for them in the Gospel; and they are looking for some qualifications in themselves to warrant their confidence in the Saviour. They do not distinguish aright between the offices of faith and hope: they do not see that the vilest creatures under heaven are warranted to believe in Christ for salvation, and to hope for acceptance with him *in his appointed way of penitence and faith*; but that to hope for heaven as persons actually brought into a state of salvation, requires an evidence in our own souls, that we are, in a measure at least, transformed into the divine image. To such persons then we would say, Do not look for qualifications in yourselves, to warrant your application to Christ, or your affiance in him; but, whilst you accept salvation freely through his blood and righteousness, look to him also for the communications of his grace to renew and sanctify your hearts, and to make you meet for his inheritance. With some indeed these doubts and fears originate rather in a consciousness of some unmortified lust, or of habitual negligence in the divine life: and where this is the case, we must declare, that peace and confidence would be a curse to them. We must "awake to righteousness, and not sin," if we would have any comfortable evidence that we are the Lord's people, or any happiness in looking forward to the eternal world. But, from whatever cause men's doubts arise, we would address to them that encouraging exhortation, "Turn ye to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope[t]."]

3. Those who have a good hope through grace—

[Rejoice in the exalted privilege to which God has called you; and endeavour to render to the Lord according to the benefits he has conferred upon you. It is said by St. John, that "he that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as God is pure[u]." Take care then that your hope operate in this way: let it stir you up to the utmost possible exertions in the way of

[r] Eph. ii. 12. [s] Ps. cxxx. 7, 8. John vi. 37.
[t] Zech. ix. 12. [u] 1 John iii. 3.

of holiness. Rest not in low attainments: think nothing yet attained, whilst any thing remains to be attained. Keep your evidences clear: let them not be clouded by any unmortified lust, or secret neglect: and then shall you "hold fast the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end[x]." This is the way to be both holy and happy: and, thus living, you may be well assured, that your "hope shall never make you ashamed[y]."]

[x] Heb. iii. 6. [y] Rom. v. 5.

DCCCCXXVII.

PREDESTINATION CONSIDERED.

Rom. viii. 29, 30. *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

THE subject of predestination is confessedly very deep and mysterious; nor should it be entered upon without extreme caution, both as to the mode of stating it, and to the persons before whom it is stated. It is much to be lamented, that there exists in the minds of many a strong prejudice against it; insomuch that the very mention of it is deemed by them little short of heresy; I had almost said, of blasphemy. But this surely is not a way in which any part of God's revealed will is to be treated. That the Inspired Writers do speak of it, is undeniable: and that our own Church also has made it an Article of faith, which all her Ministers and members are to receive, is also certain. On these accounts we must not discard the doctrine through fear of offending any who may be hostile to it; though on the other hand we ought not so frequently or so strongly to insist upon it as unnecessarily to wound and grieve them. The true medium which a Minister should aim at, is, to give to this doctrine, as well as to every other, as precisely as possible that measure of prominence and importance which it bears in the Sacred Writings. To be bringing it forward on every occasion, just as if it were among

among the first principles of religion, we consider as very injudicious, and detrimental to the best interests of religion; but to omit it altogether, we deem unworthy of a faithful servant of Christ. To the doctrines which have an opposite aspect, we give all due weight; and therefore we may be allowed to put this also before you, according as it is plainly declared in the passage which is now under our consideration.

The Apostle having designated "those who love God" as persons "who have been called according to God's purpose," proceeds to shew, that from first to last God is the author of their salvation: he foreknew, and predestinated them from all eternity to the privileges which they enjoy; and will infallibly complete his purpose respecting them, in their effectual calling, their free justification from all their sins, and their final glorification at his right hand for ever.

In the Apostle's statement we may see,

I. The principal ends of predestination—

God acts in all things according to his own sovereign will and pleasure: yet is that will regulated by the counsels of infallible wisdom[a]. Whilst therefore in all things he consults primarily his own glory, he has respect to such ends and objects as are most suited to promote his glory. The ends he has proposed to himself, in predestinating men to life, were two-fold: the *immediate* end respected *us*; and the *ultimate* end respected *his beloved Son*, through whom all his purposes were to be accomplished.

1. The *immediate* end respected *us*—

[He decreed that all the objects of his choice "should be conformed to the image of his Son." But how were they to be conformed to him? We answer, In *holiness*, in *sufferings*, and in *glory*.

We are to be conformed to Christ *in holiness*. Our blessed Lord was altogether without spot or blemish, a perfect exemplar of universal holiness: his bitterest enemies could not find any imperfection in him; and St. John's testimony concerning him is, "In him was no sin[b]." Such, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ," are we to be also[c]. Like him we must live, not unto ourselves, but unto our God alone; making it

[a] Eph. i. 5, 11. [b] 1 John iii. 5. [c] Eph. iv. 7.

it "our meat and our drink to do his holy will." Though *in* the world, we must not be *of* the world, any more than he was[d]: we must rise superior to all its concerns, resist all its temptations, mortify all its lusts, and "walk in all things as Christ walked[e]." The same mind altogether that was in him, must be in us also[f]. And *to this we are predestinated.* We were not chosen of God from eternity, or made the subjects of his new-creating grace in time, because we *were* holy, or because *he foresaw that we should be* holy; but that we *might be* holy: "we are *his workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them[g]."

We are to be conformed to Christ *in sufferings.* Throughout his whole life our Saviour was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered:" and "he was made perfect through sufferings." In like manner we also must be "a poor and afflicted people[h]." We must "take up our cross daily, and follow him:" we must be "hated of all men for his sake." "If they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more will they those of his household." "The servant cannot expect to be above his Master." We must "follow him without the camp, bearing his reproach." *To this also we are predestinated.* So St. Paul expressly affirmed respecting himself[i]; and so he affirms respecting us also: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution[k]."

We are to be conformed to Christ also *in glory.* "He is now seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high:" and there shall we also in due time be seated. Yes, "having suffered with him, we shall also reign with him," and "be glorified together[l]." We shall be like him in glory: "our vile *body* will be fashioned like unto his glorious body[m]:" our *soul* also will be changed into his perfect image[n]; and our blessedness be altogether assimilated to his[o]. And *to all of this also our predestination extends.* It is not to the means of grace only that "we are chosen, but to salvation itself, and to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ[p]."]

2. The *ultimate* end respected *our Lord Jesus Christ himself*—

[The

[d] John xvii. 14, 16. [e] 1 John ii. 6. [f] Phil. ii. 5.
[g] Eph. i. 4. & ii. 10. These two passages deserve the most attentive consideration in this view.
[h] Zeph. iii. 12. [i] 1 Thess. iii. 3, 4. [k] 2 Tim. iii. 12.
[l] ver. 17. with 2 Tim. ii. 12. [m] Phil. iii. 21.
[n] 1 John iii. 2. [o] Rev. iii. 21.
[p] 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. See also Acts xiii. 48. & 1 Thess. v. 9.

[The first-born were entitled to many privileges: to them belonged dominion, and the priesthood, and a double portion of the inheritance. In respect of all the rest of the creation, not excepting even the angels themselves, we may be styled the First-born[q]. The whole family of Believers are "kings and priests unto God," and are entitled to inherit the kingdom of our heavenly Father[r]. But in respect of us, Christ is the first-born; for "He in all things must have the pre-eminence[s]." He is to be the Head of all his Church and people[t]: and *to this he is predestinated*; yea, it is in order to this that they also are predestinated to the attainment of his glory. It was decreed in the eternal counsels of his Father, that "if he would make his soul an offering for sin," he should have "a seed to serve him," and should assuredly "be satisfied with the travail of his soul[u]." Had not this been absolutely decreed, it might have happened, that not so much as one might ever have been saved, and that, consequently, Christ might have shed his blood in vain. For, if every thing had been left entirely dependent on the free will of man, all might have used their free will precisely in the same way; and every child of man might have rejected him, exactly as the great mass of mankind are actually doing. But can we conceive that God would have given his Son to bear the iniquities of a ruined world, and have left it to mere chance, whether any single individual should ever obtain mercy through him, or become a jewel in his crown? We cannot conceive this: in fact, we know that it was not thus left to chance: we are sure, that there is a chosen people, who were from eternity given to Christ, to be redeemed by his blood, and to be saved by his grace: and that of those who were so given him, he neither has lost, nor ever will lose, so much as one[x]. How many these are, God alone knows: but we are sure they are "many," even "a multitude, whom no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation[y]."

It will probably be objected, that, if there be any who are thus predestinated unto life, the remainder must of necessity be ordained to death. But this we by no means admit. We grant that it is a difficulty which we are not able to explain: and we are contented to be ignorant of those things which it has not pleased God to reveal: and, whether men maintain or deny the doctrine in question, they will find themselves equally at a loss to make every thing intelligible to our finite capacities. It is Scripture, and Scripture alone, that must determine what is truth: and, as long as God declares with an oath that "he has

[q] Exod. iv. 22. Heb. xii. 23.
[r] Rev. i. 6. Matt. xxv. 24.
[s] Col. i. 18.
[t] Eph. i. 21, 22.
[u] Ps. xxii. 30. with Isai. liii. 10, 11.
[x] John xvii. 2, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 24.
[y] Rev. v. 9. & vii. 9.

has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live," so long we may rest assured, that, notwithstanding he has predestinated many to life, he has not predestinated one single soul to death; nor is the doctrine of absolute reprobation a just and necessary consequence of predestination. To draw the line, we again acknowledge to be beyond the power of any finite capacity: nor are we so much concerned to draw it as some may imagine: for, whether we admit or reject the doctrine of predestination, the same number will be saved at last. The man who denies that doctrine, will admit, that all who repent and believe in Christ, shall be saved; and that all the impenitent and unbelieving shall perish: and the same is admitted by those who maintain the doctrine of predestination: so that an equal number are saved on either plan. The only difference lies in this: that they who maintain this doctrine refer all the glory of man's salvation to God alone, making him the Author and the Finisher of it, from first to last; whilst those who deny the doctrine, give a great measure of the glory to the creature: for, however they may acknowledge that salvation through Christ is a gift to mankind at large, they make every individual the first moving cause of his own salvation: and exactly in proportion as they ascribe salvation either to human merit, or human agency as independent of God's grace, in that proportion they give to man a ground of glorying before God. Whatever they may say, according to them, it is man "who maketh himself to differ;" and his salvation must ultimately be ascribed to him as its true, proper, original, and moving cause. It is in this view that we are anxious to have the doctrine of predestination properly understood. As a mere abstract and speculative point, we could very contentedly wave the discussion of it: but, as involving the honour of God, we cannot but consider it as deserving our most serious attention. Nevertheless, if any man cannot receive it, we are not disposed to contend with him, but are contented with pressing on his consideration such matters only as are of primary and fundamental importance.]

Hoping however that the truth of the doctrine has approved itself to you, we shall proceed to state,

II. The way in which those ends are accomplished—

The order and method of God's dispensations, from eternity to eternity, is here clearly marked:

1. He "foreknows" men as objects of his love—

[As far as relates to mere prescience, all things are equally exposed to the view of the omnipresent God; and they who shall ultimately perish, are as much "foreknown" by

by him, as those that shall be saved. Many in this sense are foreknown by him, who are not predestinated, or called, or justified, nor ever will be glorified. But the word here used imports more than mere prescience, and includes an affectionate regard to the persons foreknown. In this sense it is elsewhere used[z], and in this sense it must be understood in the passage before us. It is equivalent to that expression of the prophet Jeremiah, "He has loved us with an everlasting love[a]." And, if we inquire into the reason of his love, we can assign no other than that which our blessed Lord has assigned, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight[b]."]

2. He then "predestinates" them unto life—

[We speak of this, as though it succeeded the former in point of time: but with God there is no interval between his fore-knowledge and fore-ordination. The inward affection, and the decree consequent upon it, are perfectly co-existent. But in God's predestination, he has respect both to the end and to the means; or rather, *to* the end *by* the means. He does not ordain men to life in a way of sin, but, as we have already shewn, in a way of holiness. This is strongly asserted by St. Paul, in a fore-cited passage; "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, *through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*[c]." And St. Peter to the same effect says, We are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*[d]."]

3. In due time he "calls" them by his word and Spirit—

[The calling here spoken of, is not the mere external call of the Gospel: for many are so called, who, rejecting the call, are never justified, or glorified. It is the internal call, whereby they are "made willing in the day of God's power." "The word comes to them in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," and they are turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God[e]." This is the call which they experience, and which is the combined result of God's eternal purpose, and his effectual grace[f].]

4. These, as soon as they believe, he "justifies"—

[Whatever sins a man may have committed, they are all blotted out of the book of God's remembrance, the very instant that he obeys the Gospel call; "All that believe," says the

[z] John x. 14. Rom. xi. 2. and in 1 Pet. i. 20. the same word is rendered, by a far stronger term, "fore-ordained."

[a] Jer. xxxi. 3. [b] Matt. xi. 26. [c] 2 Thess. ii. 13.
[d] 1 Pet. i. 2. [e] See Rom. i. 6, 7. [f] 2 Tim. i. 9.

the Apostle, "are justified from all things[g]:" nor shall so much as one of "his sins and iniquities ever be remembered against him any more[h]."]

5. These, in due time, he glorifies—

[Yes, blessed be God, the chain of God's purposes reaches from eternity to eternity; nor shall one link of it be broken. The glorification of the saints is in part effected, even in this life; inasmuch as "the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them[i];" and "they are changed into Christ's image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord[k]." But in heaven their felicity will be perfect: there "all that was in part will be done away:" they will "see as they are seen, and know as they are known;" and will be like, and with, their God, for ever and ever.

Here, it may be observed, is no distinct mention made of sanctification; and this may be supposed to give some countenance to those who imagine that sanctification is unnecessary to our final salvation. But sanctification is not omitted here: on the contrary, it is interwoven with the whole statement. For respecting whom are all these things spoken? Respecting those "who love God." Now love to God is the root and summit of all holiness: and therefore it is plain, that the persons spoken of as called, and justified, and glorified, must be holy. Moreover, the thing to which they are predestinated is, "to be conformed to the image of Christ:" but how can that be if they be not holy? Again; Sanctification is yet further implied in their justification, from which it must of necessity spring, as an effect from a cause; as also in their glorification, to which it is necessary as a means to an end: for without a "meetness for their inheritance" they could not possibly enjoy it. We see therefore that the omission is in appearance only, and not in reality; and that there is no ground whatever afforded for antinomian licentiousness.]

Many who do not in their hearts disapprove of this doctrine, yet think of it as affording matter for speculation only, and as of little, if any, use with respect to practice. But, in fact, it is a doctrine of great practical importance; for it lays the axe to the root of,

1. All boasting—

[If any man be disposed to boast, he must, in his own opinion at least, either have merited salvation in some measure by his own goodness, or effected it by his own power. They who deny the doctrine of predestination, do unavoidably give

[g] Acts xiii. 39. [h] Heb. viii. 12. [i] 1 Pet. iv. 14.
[k] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

give some occasion for men to boast: for whether they make God's predestination to be influenced by something done, or something foreseen, still it is the inherent and independent goodness of man that is made the determining ground of God's choice, and the original cause of man's salvation. But the doctrine of predestination plucks up all such conceits by the very root; it makes God's sovereign choice the primary source of man's happiness, and God's immutable purpose the means of its final consummation. If it be asked, Why did God love him? it must be answered, "Because he would love him[l]." If it be further asked, Who "hath wrought all his works in him?" it must be answered, God[m]. It is God who laid the foundation, and who carries on the spiritual building even to the end: and when the top-stone is brought forth, every sinner in the universe must "cry, Grace, grace unto it[n]."]

2. All presumption—

[The doctrine of predestination is objected to by many, under the idea that it authorizes and encourages persons to say, "I am elected, and therefore have no cause to fear, or even to take heed of my ways." But, if any man were so to abuse the doctrine, we would immediately ask him this question; Are you conformed to the image of Christ? Here is a test whereby to try our pretensions: and it will instantly discover of what value they are in the sight of God. If a man have an evidence in his own soul, that a work of grace has been begun within him, and that he has been enabled, in a considerable degree, to "put off the old man, and put on the new," then, in proportion as that change is manifest, he may infer from it his election of God: but, if that change do not appear in his life and conversation, then he may know infallibly, that, in speaking of himself as one whom God has predestinated unto life, he deceives his own soul, and gives advantage to his great adversary to destroy him. Let this then be well known, that we must try ourselves whether we be in the faith: and we must determine the matter, not by any groundless conceits of our own, but by our proficiency in righteousness and true holiness.]

3. All despondency—

[The doctrine of predestination, *if abused*, may generate both presumption and despondency: as our Church, in her 17th Article, has told us. But this does not militate against the doctrine itself; for on the same ground, we might decry every other doctrine of Christianity. Be it so: a man has not at present any evidence that he is one of God's elect: Does

[l] Deut. vii. 7, 8. & ix. 4, 5. [m] Isai. xxvi 12. 2 Cor. v. 5.
[n] Zech. iv. 6—9.

Does this warrant him to conclude that he is given over to a state of reprobation? Surely not: for, if he look into the Scriptures, he will find that even the Apostles themselves were once in a carnal unconverted state, yea, "were children of wrath, even as others°." But as the Apostles were in God's own time delivered from that state, so may we be, notwithstanding we are at this moment in a state which is most unpromising. God did not choose the Apostles for any good that was in them, or that he foresaw would be in them: and therefore he may magnify his grace towards us, even as he did towards them. His grace is his own, and he may confer it on whomsoever he will: and it is a most consolatory thought, that, as he *may*, so he often *does*, cause his grace to abound where sin has most abounded. This we are sure is the doctrine of our Church; and we cannot do better than refer you to her Article upon this subject ——— Nevertheless, if any man be not able to receive this doctrine, we would on no account press it upon his mind: we would rather say to him, Discard it from your mind: and take the broad promises of Scripture, wherein it is declared, that "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin," and that he "will save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him." Take, I say, these promises, not with any reference whatever to God's eternal counsels towards you personally, but with a perfect confidence that he will fulfil them to all who rely upon him; and that no sinner in the universe, who comes to him in his Son's name, shall ever be cast out.]

° Eph. iii. 3.

DCCCCXXVIII.

OUR DUTY TOWARDS THE JEWS.

Rom. ix. 1—5. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow of heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh; who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers; and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came; who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

FIDELITY in Ministers is absolutely indispensable. Without it we cannot approve ourselves either to God or man. Yet in the exercise of it we should maintain a tenderness of spirit, "speaking the truth" indeed,

indeed, but speaking it "in love." When at any time, as frequently we must, we bring painful truths to the ears of our hearers, we should convince them, that we are not actuated by any thing but a spirit of love. St. Paul was especially careful upon this head; as may be seen in all his Epistles, but especially in this which is before us[a]. He is constrained to declare to the Jews, God's determination to reject the Jews from being his people, and to admit the Gentiles in their stead to those privileges which the Jews had hitherto exclusively enjoyed. But, as this was a topic which must of necessity be most painful to their feelings, he labours to convince them, that, in all which he should declare respecting it, he was actuated only by a sense of duty, and not by any unkind feelings towards them; and that, so far from wishing them this evil, he would submit to any thing to deliver them from it. He calls God to witness, that he had nothing more sincerely at heart, than that, as they had already possessed, so they should ever continue to possess, the most distinguished tokens of God's love and favour.

In the words which we have just read, we may see,

I. The distinguished privileges of the Jewish people—

In setting these forth, the Apostle addresses them, not as strangers, but as "his brethren, his kinsmen, according to the flesh;" and then records the highest distinctions that had ever been conferred upon them—

They were "Israelites," descended from Jacob, who, in remembrance of his wrestling with the Angel, and prevailing with God in prayer, was honoured with the name of Israel. "To them pertained the adoption," they, as a nation, being regarded as "God's first-born." To them had been vouchsafed "the glory," even that bright cloud, which was the symbol of the Deity; which guided their forefathers through the wilderness, and afterwards abode both in the Tabernacle and the Temple, resting upon the ark, and residing between the cherubims, till the Temple itself was destroyed by the Chaldean army. Theirs also were "the covenants;" both the covenant

[a] See in Paley's "Horæ Paulinæ" what he says on the Epistle to the Romans. It is pre-eminently deserving the attention of Ministers.

venant of grace, which was given to Abraham, and the national covenant, which was made with them in the time of Moses. To them had God also "given the Law," proclaiming it with an audible voice from Mount Sinaï, and delivering it to them written with his own finger upon tables of stone. To them also was vouchsafed the ceremonial law, comprehending every minute particular respecting "the service of God;" so that in no case whatever were they left in doubt how they should approach him with acceptance. The Promises also were theirs, both those which related to the sending of the Messiah, and those which related to the possession of Canaan. "Theirs too were the fathers," Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, than whom none of the children of men had ever been more highly favoured with Divine and heavenly communications. Above all, "of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever." Yes, when the ever-blessed, the co-equal, the co-eternal Son of God came into the world, that by his own obedience unto death he might accomplish the redemption of sinful man, he assumed his human nature from them, even from a Jewish Virgin; so that, in a more strict and appropriate sense than any other person, a Jew may say of him, He is bone of *my* bone, and flesh of *my* flesh.

Consider now how glorious these distinctions were. To what other nation was any one of them ever vouchsafed? or what has the greatest monarch upon earth that can be in any degree compared with them? The honours which come of man are lighter than vanity itself, when compared with those which come of God: and when weighed in this scale, the highest monarchs in the universe are not so elevated above a slave, as the meanest Jew is exalted above them. But what shall we say to the giving birth to the Messiah, who was "the mighty God," "Emmanuel, God with us?" Here all words fail us: in vain does the imagination attempt to grasp so wonderful an event. "God manifest in the flesh!" How "great this mystery of godliness!" and how infinitely ennobled are that people, to whom the ever-blessed God is so nearly related!]

The more we contemplate the privileges of the Jewish people, the more we see,

II. The deep concern which we should feel for them—

The Apostle declares his compassion for them in the strongest terms; in considering which, it will be proper to notice,

1. What is implied in them—

[It

[It is plain that St. Paul did not approve of that spurious charity which is so prevalent in our day. We cannot endure to think that any should finally be left to perish. We regard it as the summit of uncharitableness, to suppose that Jews and Gentiles are all in a state of guilt and condemnation, and that they can be saved only by their conversion to the faith of Christ. But let any one refer to our text, and he will see at once what St. Paul's opinion was on this most interesting subject. If the Jews in their unconverted state were safe, why was St. Paul so grieved on their account? Would he have felt such "great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart" for them, or made such solemn appeals to God respecting his anxiety for them, if they had been in a state of favour and acceptance with God? There cannot possibly be a doubt on this subject: he regarded them all as perishing in their sins, according to that declaration of our blessed Lord, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins[b]." Let this then be borne in mind, in referenee to that unhappy people, yes, and in reference to ourselves also, if we be not truly and unfeignedly devoted to God, as a penitent, believing, and obedient people ———]

2. What is expressed—

[The terms, especially those in the third verse of our text, are so strong, that Commentators have been at a loss to explain them, so as to render them consistent with what may reasonably be supposed to have been the actual experience of St. Paul. As for his wishing himself eternally banished from God for his brethren's sake, it could not be: though he might, like Moses, be contented to be blotted out from the list of God's people *here in this world*[c], or even to be treated as accursed *after the example* of Christ, for his brethren's sake. But we need not have recourse to either of these interpretations; for by only putting a part of the Apostle's words into a parenthesis, the sense will be perfectly simple. He once was as full of enmity against Christ, and determined to have no connexion with him, as much as any of his brethren: and he knew that, *in effect*, this was to "wish himself accursed from Christ[d]." He tells them therefore, that, having been in the same perilous circumstances with themselves, he felt the more deeply for them. Thus by putting into a parenthesis those words, "I once wished myself accursed from Christ," the sense will exactly accord with what the Apostle says in his Epistle to the Galatians, "Be ye as I am: for I was as ye are[e]."

But

[b] John viii. 24. [c] Exod. xxxii. 32.

[d] See Isai. xxviii. 15. where *the effect is put for the cause* precisely in a similar way.

[e] Gal. iv. 12. For a fuller explanation of the text, see the Skeleton upon it in the former work.

But though by this explanation of the text we get rid of that from whence it seems to derive its greatest force, enough remains in it to serve as an example to the whole world. St. Paul, knowing that his brethren, whilst they continued in unbelief, were perishing in their sins, "had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart on their account," and regarded nothing too much to do or suffer, if by any means he might be instrumental to their salvation. This is what every Christian should feel; and it is a shame to the whole Christian world that so little of it is felt amongst us. How few can truly join in the solemn appeal which is here made to the heart-searching God! Instead of an appeal to God respecting the greatness and continuance of our sorrow in behalf of the Jewish nation, does not conscience rather call for a confession, that we have had no more heaviness or sorrow of heart for them, than if they had been in a state of perfect safety? Alas! when have we spent one single hour in prayer for them? What sacrifices have we made, or what exertions, for the enlightening of their minds, and the saving of their souls? If we should say, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved," would not our daily experience give the lie to our profession? Surely we have need to blush and be ashamed, every one of us. Had we seen a vessel wrecked, and all the crew perishing in the ocean, there is not one amongst us so inhuman, but he would be filled with the tenderest concern for them, and exert himself to the uttermost, if by any means he might save some of them. But we have seen millions of God's antient people perishing for ever, and have had the means of saving them within our own reach, and we have made no efforts for their welfare, nor felt a pang on account of their destruction. Oh, Brethren! let it not be thus with us any longer: but let us cultivate the spirit of the Apostle, and labour henceforth as he did, for the restoration and salvation of our Jewish Brethren.

It will be in vain, however, to urge you to exertions for others, if you begin not with your own souls. Here is, in reality, the root of all our neglect of others: we are not truly and thoroughly concerned even about ourselves. Alas! if we were to make, respecting our own souls, the appeal to God which the Apostle made respecting his Jewish Brethren, how few could utter it in truth! Let us try it one moment: "O my God, I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart" *on account of my own sins;* I feel them as a heavy burthen, too heavy for me to bear; and I find no rest in my soul, but by coming weary and heavy-laden to my Lord and Saviour. Beloved Brethren, is this true of you? can you say it and "not lie?"

Does

Does your conscience attest the truth of it? and does the Holy Ghost, the heart-searching God, bear witness to it? What a fearful state must *you* then be in, if, with your superior advantages, you are yet impenitent and unbelieving, like the Jews themselves? Surely there is need that your Brethren in Christ, who once were in your perilous condition, but have been converted by the grace of God, should weep and mourn over you, even as the Apostle did over the unbelieving Jews.

Will you say, that there is no occasion for you to fear, since in your baptism you were made "members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of Heaven[f]?" I answer, This is the very reason why you should weep the more for your sins; because, when you already possess such glorious advantages, even as the Jews did by circumcision, you should lose them all, instead of securing the everlasting possession of them through the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle acknowledges the exalted privileges of the Jews, "to whom pertained the adoption" into God's family: but he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for them notwithstanding, because their guilt was the greater, and their condemnation would be the heavier on account of their impenitence and unbelief. And so, whilst *you* are exalted to heaven, even like Bethsaïda and Capernaum, in the privileges you enjoy, there is reason to fear that you will be cast the deeper into hell for your misimprovement of them, and that in the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yea, and for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you.

Begin then, all of you, with your own souls; and then extend your concern to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. And think not that your labours for *them* will be in vain; for the same power which can convert and save *you*, is able to effect the same blessed work for *them*. Less than omnipotence will not suffice for *you*: and to omnipotence all things are alike easy. See what God did for the Jews in the first ages———See what he did for the benighted Gentiles, who were quite as far from God as the Jews at this hour can be———Think of our forefathers once bowing down to stocks and stones, and see what Britain now is———Or, if you are yourselves renewed by Divine grace, see what wonders have been wrought for *you*———At all events, do what you can to serve your God, and to benefit your fellow-creatures, fully confiding in that gracious declaration, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."]

[f] See the Church Catechism.

DCCCCXXIX.

GOD'S SOVEREIGN MERCY THE SOURCE OF ALL OUR BLESSINGS.

Rom. ix. 16. *So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

THE Apostle, being about to declare the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, introduces his subject with a most solemn appeal to God, that he had "continual sorrow and heaviness in his heart," on account of the unhappy state of his Jewish Brethren. He knew that the subject would be very painful to the Jews; and yet he could not, consistently with his duty to God, conceal it from them: but he strove as much as possible to lessen the offence it would occasion, by assuring them of his unbounded affection for them, and his willingness to endure any thing, if it might but be subservient to their eternal welfare.

The subject as treated by the Apostle is no less offensive to the great mass of nominal Christians, than it was to the Jews: for he insists so strongly on God's right to dispense the blessings of his Gospel according to his own sovereign will, that the proud heart of man cannot endure it. We are apt to think we have a claim upon God; and that he is *bound* to do for *us* all that he has at any time done for his most-favoured servants: and, when we are told, that he has a right to do what he will with his own, we deny him that right, and accuse him of injustice, precisely as the Jews themselves did. But the servant of God must speak, whether men will hear, or whether they forbear: he must declare to men the whole counsel of God, "even though briars and thorns be with him, and he dwell among scorpions." At the same time, it should be his most anxious endeavour to "speak the truth in love." This *we* would do. God knoweth that it is painful to us to give offence; yet not so much on our own account, as on account of those who are not able to receive our word. We would gladly do, yea,

and

and suffer too, whatever should be necessary for their welfare: but still we cannot conceal the truth, or "keep back any thing that is profitable unto men." We intreat however, that, if we speak any thing which may not at first approve itself to those who hear it, they will give us credit for seeking conscientiously their best interests, according to the light that God hath given us.

The words of our text are evidently a conclusion drawn from a preceding argument. To view them therefore aright, we must consider,

I. The argument on which the conclusion is founded—

Having intimated the danger to which his countrymen were exposed of perishing in unbelief, he anticipates an objection which they were disposed to make; namely, That they were in no danger, because, as descendants of Abraham, they were interested in the covenant made with him, and were heirs of all the blessings which were promised to him and to his seed: and that, consequently, if they were to perish, "the word of God would have been of no effect[a]." To this the Apostle replies, that the promises were not made to Abraham's *natural* seed; but to his *spiritual* seed, who should be partakers of Abraham's faith: and that, as they were yet in unbelief, they had no part or lot in Abraham's blessings[b]. This he proceeds to prove to them,

1. From undeniable and acknowledged facts—

[The blessings of the covenant were not given to all Abraham's *natural* seed, even in the very first instance. Ishmael, who was born according to the course of nature, had no part in that covenant; the blessings of which were restricted to Isaac, who was born many years afterwards, not according to the common course of nature, but solely by virtue of an express promise. Here then was a proof, even in the immediate children of Abraham, that persons might be lineally descended from him, and yet be left without any interest in the covenant made with him.

But a further, and still stronger, proof of this took place in the children of this very Isaac, to whom the promise was restricted. His wife Rebecca bare him twins: and whilst these children

[a] ver. 6. [b] ver. 7, 8.

children were yet in the womb, and "before they could possibly have done either good or evil, it was said to her, The elder shall serve the younger[c]:" which prophecy was accomplished to their latest posterity, as the prophet Malachi attests, saying, "Jacob have I loved; but Esau have I hated[d]." Now if they should think that in the former instance respect was had to the character of the two children, Ishmael and Isaac, and that the decree was founded on *that*, such a notion is altogether excluded from the present instance, because the children had done neither good nor evil; and the reason of the decree is expressly said to be, "that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth."

Here then an exclusion of a part of the *natural* seed is further proved, and *that* too by the sovereign disposal of God himself, irrespective of the characters of the persons respecting whom the decree was made. How much more therefore might those of Abraham's descendants who should continue obstinate in unbelief, be excluded from the blessings of that covenant, which they themselves were so averse to embrace.]

2. From the express declarations of God himself—

[The Jews in the Apostle's days trusted in the words of Moses, which they interpreted as comprehending all the Jewish nation without exception within the bonds of the covenant. To Moses therefore the Apostle has recourse; and appeals to what God himself had spoken to him. As in the foregoing instances God had exercised his own sovereign will in appointing who should, and who should not, be partakers of his covenant, so, in his communications with Moses also he had claimed to himself the same right, and declared that he would act in the same sovereign way: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion[e]." Here God considers all the human race as in a state of guilt and misery, no one of them having any claim on him for mercy, or any thing that could entitle him to a preference beyond his brethren: and he declares, that, as he would exercise his own sovereign will in dispensing his blessings to them, so he would have his sovereign grace and mercy acknowledged by all who should receive them.

This point is further confirmed by the Apostle's adducing what God had spoken also to Pharaoh. God had exalted Pharaoh to the throne of Egypt, and had invested him with the most arbitrary and unbounded power. Such power was necessary, in order that there might be full scope for the rebellion of man, and the consequent triumphs of God over him. God

[c] ver. 9—12. [d] ver. 13. with Mal. i. 2, 3.
[e] ver. 15. with Exod. xxxiii. 19.

God knew that there were in the heart of Pharaoh all those dispositions which would resist him to the uttermost; and that he would thus call forth eventually those judgments which God, for his own glory, had determined to inflict on the oppressors of his people: and, whilst Pharaoh was in the very act of rebellion, and hardening himself more and more against his God, God said to him, "For this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." The Apostle, having cited this in confirmation of what he had said respecting Moses, asserts in yet stronger language than before, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

Thus the Apostle has proved beyond all contradiction the unquestionable right of God to give, or to withhold, his blessings, according to his own sovereign will and pleasure.

But before we proceed to the conclusion which the Apostle draws from hence, we would guard what has been already spoken from any mis-construction. Though God's *right* to give or to withhold his blessings is asserted, together with the actual bestowment of them according to his sovereign will, yet *he never withholds his blessing from any creature who humbly seeks it at his hands;* much less does he ever infuse evil into the mind of any man in order to glorify himself in his destruction. His hardening of Pharaoh's heart consisted in leaving him to himself, and to the unrestrained exercise of his own evil dispositions: and if we were all left as Pharaoh was, we should harden our own hearts precisely as Pharaoh did. In a word, *God's blessings are never dispensed but in a way of grace; his judgments are never executed but in a way of righteous retribution.*]

Having thus stated the argument on which the Apostle's conclusion is founded, we come to the consideration of,

II. The conclusion itself—

"The conclusion is justly formed from the premises. It is indeed an humiliating conclusion, and a truth which our proud hearts are very averse to acknowledge; but still we must join issue with the Apostle, and say, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

Let not this however be understood, as though it sanctioned any want of exertion on our part—

[God does not here *forbid* us to will or to run, nor does he *exempt us from the duty* of both willing and running: no such

such thing is here expressed, nor can any such thing be deduced from it. How grievous is it that any should be found impious enough to cite this passage as discountenancing exertions on our part! In the whole Sacred Records, from the beginning to the end, there is not to be found one single word that can warrant such an idea as this. On the contrary, God always complains of us for not exerting ourselves, and refers our final condemnation to this as its proper ground and cause: "Ye *will not* come unto me, that ye might have life," says our Lord. "How often would I have gathered you together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye *would not!*" As for those who say, "I can do nothing without God, and therefore, till God come, I may as well sit still, and attempt nothing." God, so far from giving occasion for such a sentiment and such conduct, calls us most earnestly to exertion, and promises that we shall not exert ourselves in vain: "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:" and, "Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out:" and, "When said I ever to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me, in vain?" Know then, that to found any such sentiment on the words of the Apostle, is a gross perversion of the word of God, and an impious plea for antinomian licentiousness. But, that you may have a just view of this assertion,]

Its plain import is, that God's free grace and mercy are the true and only sources of all good—

[Whatever be our success in the divine life, we must not refer it to our own volitions, or our own exertions. For, what inclination has the natural man to that which is truly good? None at all: there is not one good thought or desire in the heart of an unregenerate man: his will is altogether towards what is evil[f]: and if a good inclination be manifested by any one of us, it has been previously put into our hearts by Him who "giveth us to *will* and to do, of his own good pleasure[g]." Nor can any exertions of ours in our natural state be of themselves effectual; for our blessed Lord expressly says, "Without me, or separate from me, ye can do nothing." We must therefore "never sacrifice to our own net, or burn incense to our own drag." God must have all the glory: it is "he who worketh all our works in us:" "Of him is our fruit found:" and to all eternity our song must be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise." It is impossible for us ever to be too jealous upon this head. We are told, that "*of* him are all things, and *for* him are all things:" and therefore to him we must look for every thing that we need; and to him, even to his sovereign grace and mercy,

[f] Gen. vi. 5. [g] Phil. ii. 13.

mercy, must we ascribe every thing that we have received. If we differ, either from others, or from our former selves, we must never forget, one moment, "who it is that hath made us to differ:" and if we be able to say with the Apostle, "I have laboured more abundantly than others," we must instantly correct ourselves, and add, "Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me[h]."]

It remains only now, in CONCLUSION, that we shew you,

1. How these sentiments are to be *maintained*—

[We confess with grief and shame that many carry these sentiments too far, and maintain them in a very unhallowed way. But, whilst we maintain what God has so plainly taught, we would lift our voice without ceasing against every abuse of these doctrines. To those who accord with these views of divine truth, we most affectionately suggest the following cautions. *Take heed to the manner in which you maintain these truths.* Let no man maintain them *presumptuously*, as though you could fathom the depths contained in them, or as though they gave you any licence for sloth and supineness. They contain mysteries, which God alone can fully comprehend, and difficulties which he alone can fully reconcile: but be it remembered, that there are far more and greater difficulties involved in a denial of them: and that our wisdom is, to receive every word of God with child-like simplicity, and to say, "What I know not now, I shall know hereafter."

Nor let any hold them *irreverently*. Some will speak of these deep things of God as familiarly as if there were no mystery at all in them, or as if they were the uninspired dogmas of some antient philosopher. But when we enter on "such holy ground," we should, as Moses, "take off our shoes," and proceed with reverential awe. "God is in heaven, and we upon earth; therefore should our words be few," and diffident, and humble.

Nor should they be maintained *uncharitably*. Many there are who cannot see these truths, who yet are in a state truly pleasing to God; yea many, at whose feet the best of us may be glad to be found in heaven. It is a great evil, when these doctrines are made a ground of separation one from another, and

[h] There are some who put a totally different construction on our text, and interpret it as though the Apostle had said, "It is not of him *only* that willeth &c." Thus, by their *interpolation* they expressly *contradict the Apostle*, and *subvert the whole train of his reasoning*. If this were the meaning of the Apostle, what occasion would there be for the objections of his adversaries in v. 14. & v. 19.? Alas! that ever such liberties should be taken with the word God!

and when the advocates of different systems anathematize each other. Let all such dispositions be banished from the Church of God. Whoever may be wrong, they never can be right who violate charity, or refuse to others the right of judging for themselves. For the fundamental truths of Christianity we must contend to the uttermost, (though even for *them* with meekness and love:) but in reference to truths which are involved in so much obscurity as those which relate to the sovereignty of God, mutual kindness and concession are far better than vehement argumentation and uncharitable discussion.

Lastly, let not these truths be maintained *exclusively*. Many are so partial to these deeper truths, that they can hardly condescend to speak of repentance and faith; and, as for exhortations to duty, they are apt to think such things *legal* and *carnal*. O Beloved! flee from such a spirit, as you would from the plague: wherever it exists, it betrays a sad want of humility. Be ye as little children: let every word of God be dear to you: and be as ready to dwell upon the invitations, and precepts, and exhortations of the Gospel, as on these deeper mysteries, which may easily be strained too far, and may give occasion for inferences, plausible indeed, but erroneous, and contrary to the analogy of faith.]

2. How they are to be *improved*—

[The proper use of these deeper truths is to abase us with humility, as creatures destitute of all good; and at the same time to exalt us as creatures infinitely indebted to the grace of God. Make this improvement of them, and they can never do you any harm: yea, receive them for these ends, and there are no other truths whatever that will operate to an equal extent. Who ever maintained the doctrines of grace more strenuously than the apostle Paul? yet who ever so laboured in the cause of his adorable Redeemer? Take him then for your pattern, both in your sentiments and conduct; and then you will shew, that nothing so "constrains, as the love of Christ;" nothing so stimulates to a compliance with God's will, as a sense of obligation to the riches of his grace.]

DCCCCXXX.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY NOT TO BE ARRAIGNED BY MEN.

Rom. ix. 19—24. *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*

honour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

THERE are some persons so partial to, what we may call, the high doctrines of the Gospel, that they can scarcely endure to hear any thing else: they are like persons whose taste is vitiated by strong drink or highly-seasoned food; they have no appetite for any thing which does not savour of their favourite opinions. This is a great evil in the Church, not only as injuring the souls in whom it exists, but as tending exceedingly to strengthen the prejudices of others against the doctrines which are so abused. Those who are thus disposed towards "the deep things of God," fancy themselves *edified*, merely because their corrupt taste is gratified: but their edification is not real and Scriptural; for, if it were, it would incline them to receive with meekness and humility every word of God; whereas they treat with contempt every thing which seems to savour of plain practical religion. We regret exceedingly that such persons exist: but we must not, on their account, run into an opposite extreme, and keep these doctrines altogether out of sight: we must "not shun to declare unto men the whole counsel of God." Whatsoever is revealed in the Sacred Records must be brought forth in its season: nor are we at liberty to "withhold from men any thing that may be profitable unto them." We therefore address ourselves to every subject in its place: though on such subjects as that which is before us, we would do it with fear and trembling, conscious how unable we are to do justice to it, and fearful lest by any means we should make it an occasion of offence to those who are not prepared for the investigation of it. The sovereignty of God is to the proud heart of man an unpalatable subject; but in the passage before us we are called to vindicate it against the objections

of

of those who are disposed, like the Jew in our text, to contend against it.

To place the matter in its true light, we shall consider,

I. The point at issue between the objector and St. Paul—

[St. Paul had strongly intimated, that the Jews were now to be rejected from the Church of God, and that the Gentiles were to be admitted into it. This he knew was a most offensive subject to the Jews; and therefore he had shewn, both from God's word to Moses, and his dealings with Pharaoh, that God had a right to communicate his blessings, or execute his judgments, in such a way as should conduce most to his own glory. The Jew, not convinced, is represented as declaring, that, if God exercise his sovereignty in this way, the blame of man's condemnation must be transferred to God himself, since it was impossible for man to resist his will.

That this was the jet of the question between them, is evident; for to this end St. Paul's arguments had tended; and nothing less than this could have given rise to such an objection: to this also the answer of the Apostle directly applies. The objection, it is true, did not *fairly* arise out of St. Paul's statement: but the Jew *took occasion* from his statement to found his objection upon it: and to the question thus stated, we must now reply.]

II. The Apostle's determination of it—

St. Paul hearing such a blasphemous objection as this, "Why doth God yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" replies to it,

1. In a way of just reprehension—

["Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" Consider thyself as *a creature*; What right hast thou to sit in judgment upon God? Dost thou understand all his counsels? Art thou able to fathom the depth of his wisdom? Canst thou "find out the Almighty to perfection?" How canst thou presume thus to arraign the conduct of thy God, and to "condemn him that thou mayest be justified?" What wouldest thou think of thine own child, if he, whilst yet a child, should stand up and accuse thee as unwise and unjust, in the most deliberate exercise of thy counsels? or, What wouldest thou think of a peasant who should presume thus to sit in judgment upon the counsels of a Minister of State? Art *thou* then authorized to arraign the conduct of thy *God?*

But consider thyself as *a sinner*, and how atrocious does thy conduct then appear! Thou who mightest justly have been

been consigned over to perdition the first moment thou hadst sinned, dost thou complain of thy God as unjust and tyrannical, if he dispense to others the blessings which thou hast refused to accept? Impious wretch! As well might the clay rise up against the potter, and condemn him for having fashioned it according to his own will.]

2. In a way of sound argument—

[Two things St. Paul proceeds to substantiate against his objector: the one was, *That God had a right to dispose of every thing according to his own sovereign will and pleasure:* and the other was, *That in the way he had hitherto disposed of them, and had determined still to dispose of them, he was fully justified.*]

Let us consider these assertions more fully—

[A potter, it is acknowledged, has a sovereign right over his clay; and so has God over all the works of his hands. When he formed angels, was he bound to furnish them with all the faculties they possess? and, having formed them, might he not have annihilated them again, and consigned them over again to their former non-existence. When he formed man and beast *of the same clay*, might he not have given higher faculties to the brute creation, and less to man? or might he not have reduced man immediately to the state of the beasts, without doing any injury to man? Is not this, in reality, what God is doing every day, as it were, before our eyes; bereaving one and another of his mental faculties, and reducing him to a state far below the beasts? It is evident, that God may *of the same lump* make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour, either in their first creation, or in their subsequent use and destination.

The same also we may say in relation to the eternal states of men, if only we consider them, as they really are, one vast mass of guilt and corruption. When Adam fell, God was at liberty to leave him as he was, in all his guilt and corruption, or to redeem him from it, and to make him a vessel of honour by his new-creating power. When God chose Abraham out of the whole world of idolaters, he was at liberty to have chosen others besides him, if he had been pleased so to do, or to have restricted the blessings of his covenant to Ishmael and Esau, instead of limiting them to Isaac and Jacob. If he had seen fit to do this, whom would he have injured? or who would have had any right to complain? Whom did he injure when he chose the Jews? Did he by separating them from the rest of mankind, and granting exclusively to them the ordinances of his grace, do any injustice to the Gentile world? or, now that he is pleased to send his Gospel to the Gentiles, does he do any injustice to the Jews? In favouring *us* with the full light of Revelation, does he injure the

the millions of Mahometans and Pagans who are less favoured than ourselves? In like manner, if he send to some of us fuller opportunities of instruction than to others, or richer communications of his grace, is he not at liberty to do so?

Let it be remembered, that the question is not, Whether God shall punish an innocent person, or a guilty person beyond his deserts? *That* could receive no other answer than that given by the Apostle, "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." But the question is, Whether, when all mankind are in a state of guilt and condemnation, God may not "have mercy on whom he will have mercy?" And to this question we reply by asking another, "May He not do what he will with his own[a]?"

But let us turn to the latter part of the Apostle's answer; wherein he asserts confidently, that if we attend carefully to the way in which God has disposed of men, and has determined still to dispose of them, he is, and ever must be, justified.

God has determined to get himself glory upon all mankind, whether they will it, or not. He will be glorified both in them that are saved, and in them that perish.

"What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known, endure the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" is he not at liberty to do so? Take, for instance, Pharaoh. If God had pleased, he might have cut off Pharaoh on his first refusal to let the people of Israel go; or at any one of the ten successive plagues: but he was not *obliged* to do so: he was surely at liberty to spare him, and exercise forbearance towards him, and to remove in succession the different plagues from him, and to give him space for repentance till he had filled up the measure of his iniquities, and was quite ripe for those signal judgments that had been denounced against him. In like manner, the Jews might justly have been cut off, when they renounced their allegiance to God, and worshipped the golden calf. God might, without any impeachment of his justice, have executed then the threatened judgment of destroying instantly that rebellious nation, and raising up another from the loins of Moses. But he saw fit to exercise mercy towards them, and to impart to them yet more abundant communications of his grace and favour. Surely in this he did them no injury. So also under all their provocations in the wilderness, during the space of forty years, and under all their apostacies from him in the land of Canaan for the space of fifteen hundred years, he might, if he had seen fit, have destroyed them: and, to say the least, he did them no injury in bearing with them, till, by the crucifixion of their Messiah, they had "filled up the measure

[a] Matt. xx. 15.

sure of their own and their fathers' iniquities. God's foreknowing how much they would abuse his mercies, was no reason why he should not exercise mercy towards them: for by his forbearance his mercy was displayed; and by their accumulated guilt and aggravated condemnation his indignation against sin, and his power to avenge it, were more conspicuously displayed. The same we may say in reference to any person or number of persons; God is not bound to cut them off the moment they sin against him: he may continue to cultivate the barren fig-tree year after year, if he be pleased to do so, in order to shew more clearly its incurable sterility, and his own justice in its final excision. Thus, I say, He may act towards "the vessels of his wrath."

So also he may pursue a similar line of conduct towards "the vessels of mercy," in order ultimately to "make known upon them the riches of his glory." He was not compelled to bring out Abraham from his family and his country, while he was yet a child: he was at liberty to leave him bowing down to stocks and stones, like all the rest around him, till the hour which he in his secret counsels had appointed for his effectual calling was arrived. Nor, when God called Abraham, was he compelled to call all other Gentiles at the same time: he was at liberty to "leave them to their own ways" till the times of the Messiah, in order to shew more fully, that "the world by wisdom knew not God," and that, if left to themselves, nothing but universal ruin must ensue. St. Paul tells us, that God, in his secret counsels, had "separated him as a chosen vessel, even from his mother's womb:" yet had God left him for many years to his own heart's lusts, and to the perpetration of the most enormous wickedness. Was God unjust in this? Was God bound to convert him before? Was he not at liberty to leave this man to the dictates of his own deceived conscience, that he might gain the more glory in his conversion; and "shew forth in him all long-suffering, for a pattern to all who should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting[b]?" The dying thief, too,—Was not God at liberty to let him go on as he did to the latest hour of his life, that he might shew in him what Divine grace and mercy could effect, even at the eleventh hour? God would have done no injury to any of these, if he had never so distinguished them by his power and grace: nor, in having so distinguished them, has he done any injury to others, either to Paul's companions in his journey, or to the other thief upon the cross. It was thus that our blessed Lord acted in reference to Lazarus. When called to come and heal him, he staid till he had been dead four days, *on purpose* that, by raising him after so long a time, his own power might be the more abundantly glorified[bb]. And did he any wrong in this?

But

[b] 1 Tim. i. 16. [bb] John xi. 6, 15, 40.

But if our proud hearts be yet disposed to rise up against God, and reply against him, the extraordinary caution with which St. Paul gives his answer must silence us for ever. Between the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy he makes this striking distinction; that the vessels of wrath *fit themselves for destruction*, but the vessels of mercy are *prepared for glory by their God*[c]. The judgments executed on the ungodly, at whatever period they are inflicted, are brought on them, not by any absolute decree of God, but by their own wilful and obstinate continuance in sin: but the blessings imparted to the godly are solely the fruit of God's sovereign grace and mercy. They who perish must take all the shame to themselves; and those who are saved must give all the glory to their God.

The manner in which the Apostle states his argument, should not be altogether unnoticed. "What if" so and so? Who has any thing to reply against it? Is there any thing in it contrary to *reason?* let him bring it to the test of reason. Is there any thing contrary to *Scripture?* let him consult the passages to which I now refer him, and he shall see, that this very mode of dealing towards all mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles, is precisely that which all the Prophets have taught us to expect at the hands of God[d]. He has, for his own glory, left the Gentiles for two thousand years, and taken the Jews for 'his peculiar people; and now, for his own glory also, will he for a season leave the Jews,' and take the Gentiles. In this matter, neither the one nor the other have any claim upon him: in taking the one and leaving the other, he did no injustice *formerly:* and in now abandoning those whom he formerly took, (more especially since they have filled up the measure of their iniquities,) and in taking those whom he then left, he does no injustice *now:* but in both he is, and will be, glorified: he even in this world glorifies, both in the one and in the other, his patience and long-suffering, and forbearance; but, in the world to come, he will glorify his perfections upon both of them in a more appropriate way;—on the vessels of wrath, his *power;* but on the vessels of mercy, his free and sovereign, and unbounded *grace.*]

Having investigated with care the Apostle's answer, we will conclude with suggesting,

III. The proper improvement of the subject—

The subject offers many important hints,

1. To objectors—

[These, alas! are a very numerous body, even in the Christian world. Favoured as *we* are above the rest of the world,

[c] See the Greek. [d] ver. 25—27.

world, it might be hoped that *we* should be the last to arraign the sovereignty of Almighty God. Yet amongst us there are many who will dispute against the doctrines of grace, precisely in the way that the unbelieving Jew is represented as doing in our text. One would be ready to suppose, from the confidence with which they urge their impious objections, that they had been the secret Counsellors of the Most High. They determine, without any hesitation or doubt, what will, and what will not, consist with the Divine attributes.

Beloved Brethren, this is not the way in which it becomes frail dust and ashes to proceed: and if you will presume thus to reprove God, you must "answer it" at your cost[dd]. Be assured that such conduct ill becomes you, and is most offensive to your God[e]: and your wisdom is to forbear all such impiety in future[f]. Go to any person deeply versed in sciences of any kind; and he will tell you paradoxes without number which you cannot understand, which yet he knows to be true, and is able to prove, if you had sufficient knowledge of that particular science to comprehend him. Know then, that God also, if he have revealed what appears paradoxical to you, can fully reconcile his own declarations, and will do so in the eternal world; though, if he were now to do it, you would not have capacity sufficient to discern the truth and excellence of his communications. Be assured, that, "as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his thoughts and ways high above yours."

But there are many among those who pretend to vindicate the ways of God, who are scarcely less worthy of reproof than those who presume to condemn them. There are many who speak of "the deep things of God," as if they were as plain and easy and intelligible as the simplest truth that can be mentioned. They dwell exclusively on these great and hidden mysteries, and leave all the plainer doctrines of repentance, faith, and obedience, as *low* matters, unworthy of their attention, and as *unprofitable* to any good end. Nothing pleases them but what brings immediately to their view the Divine decrees: and of these they speak in a way that the Scriptures by no means authorize. They draw conclusions from partial statements, without giving due weight to things which God himself has spoken on the opposite side: and then they vindicate with unhallowed boldness and confidence what they themselves have put, as it were, into the mouth of God. This was the very conduct of Job's friends; and justly were they rebuked by God for their presumption. They *took partial declarations* of God, and then *put their own unqualified construction upon them*, and *deduced from them inferences which they were never intended to bear*. In this way they bore down righteous

[dd] Job xl. 2. [e] ib. ver. 8. [f] ib. ver. 5.

righteous Job as an ignorant self-deceiver. But God declared that they had not spoken the thing that was right, as his servant Job had done; and required them to humble themselves for their folly and impiety. Let not any of you ever subject yourselves to the same reproof: for "Woe to him," saith God, "that striveth with his Maker[g]." It becomes you, doubtless, to investigate, and as far as possible to understand, every truth of God: but, in things so infinitely beyond the reach of human intellect, it becomes you to be humble, modest, diffident: and in things respecting which the most pious men may differ in their judgment, it becomes you cheerfully to concede to others the liberty which you arrogate to yourselves. And we are well persuaded, that mutual candour and forbearance among those of opposite principles, would do infinitely more towards the bringing all to just views, than all the angry contentions of violent partisans.]

2. To all persons without exception—

[You, Brethren, have other things to do than to be wasting your time about unprofitable disputes. You are all at this very moment vessels of wrath, or vessels of mercy: you are now, even whilst I am speaking to you, under the hands of the Potter. You are actually upon the lathes, preparing and fashioning, either for vessels of honour, or vessels of dishonour. The question that most concerns you is, For which you are preparing? and how you may know for which you are destined? In order to ascertain this, you need not look into the book of God's decrees, but simply examine the state of your own hearts. For what are you preparing? Are you diligently seeking after God from day to day? Are you living by faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ, washing daily in the fountain of his blood, and renewed daily by the operations of his Spirit? Are you progressively advancing in the enjoyment of his presence, the performance of his will, and the attainment of his image? Are you, in a word, beginning to live the life of heaven upon earth? This will mark you vessels of honour: and the want of this is sufficient to stamp you vessels unto dishonour. It is not necessary that you should be committing any flagrant sins in order to constitute you vessels of wrath: it is quite sufficient that you are not growing up into Christ as your living Head, and devoted altogether to his service and glory. Let these inquiries then occupy your mind, and trouble not yourselves about the "secret things which belong only to your God." Whether you are pleased with the Potter or not, he is going on with his work; and in a short time he will cut you from the lathe, and fix your everlasting destinies. But, blessed be his name! He

[g] Isai. xlv. 9.

He is able to change both your form and use: and, if you call upon him, he will do it; and he can do it as easily as a potter can mar the clay which has been formed only for a degraded use, and fashion it into a vessel of the most dignified description. Whilst you are upon the lathe, nothing is impossible: and who can tell but that you have been suffered, even to this hour, to fit yourselves for vessels of wrath, in order that God may be the more glorified in the change that shall be wrought in you? Yes, perhaps the hour is now come for Saul's conversion: perhaps this is the hour when he has decreed to humble you in the dust before him, and to make you a vessel of honour that shall display, almost beyond all others, the riches of his glory? O lift up your hearts to him, and pray, that at this time his grace may be magnified in you, and that you may be monuments of his love and mercy to all eternity.

But perhaps with others the hour is come, when the measure of your iniquities shall be filled, and when, like Pharaoh, you shall be made signal monuments of God's wrath and indignation. What a fearful thought! The Lord grant that it may not be realized in any of you. But beware! His mercy and forbearance will have an end; and that end may be much nearer than you expect. Let not one hour more pass unimproved: but "seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him whilst he is near."

As for you who have reason to hope that you are already vessels of mercy, oh! bless and praise your God. Remember, ye were taken from the same mass of clay, as others, who bear a very different shape. Remember, too, to whom you owe the distinction that has been conferred upon you. Had you been left to yourselves, you would have been in as degraded a state as any. It is God, and God alone, who has made you to differ, either from others, or from your former selves. Give him then the glory of his rich and sovereign grace, and seek daily to become more and more "vessels of honour, meet for your Master's use [h]."]

[h] 2 Tim. ii, 20, 21.

DCCCCXXXI.

CHRIST REJECTED BY THE JEWS, AND BELIEVED ON BY THE GENTILES.

Rom. ix. 30—33. *What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they*

they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

A VERY great proportion of the controversies which exist in the Christian world, arise from an overstraining of just principles, and carrying them to an undue extent. Many are not contented with maintaining what God has plainly declared; but they will found on his declarations every thing that appears to be deducible from them. But, however legitimate any deduction may appear to us, we should make a great difference between it and the word on which it is founded; more especially if there be in the holy Scriptures other passages directly opposed to our deductions. We should remember, that our finite faculties are incapable of comprehending all that the infinitely wise God has seen fit to reveal: and therefore, when we advance even an hair's breadth beyond what God has expressly authorized, we should proceed with the utmost caution and diffidence. A rash and presumptuous mind will, without hesitation, build the doctrine of reprobation upon the declarations of St. Paul in this chapter. But St. Paul forbare to press his principles so far; because, however such an inference might appear just in the eyes of fallible man, it would have been in direct opposition to other declarations of Almighty God. His moderation is beautifully exhibited in this chapter. In order to silence the blasphemous cavils of an objector, he had been constrained to occupy high ground, and to assert God's sovereign right to dispose of all his creatures, even as the potter has over the clay, which he has prepared for his own use. But when he comes to sum up his argument, he does not refer the rejection of the Jews to the mere sovereign will of God, but to their own obstinate pride and unbelief: thereby shewing us, that, whilst we properly refer all good to God, we must trace all evil to ourselves: if we are saved, it is God who saves us,

from

from first to last; but, if we perish, we perish through our own fault alone.

For the further elucidation of our text, we shall consider,

I. The fact here stated—

It was a plain and undeniable fact, that the Gentiles had embraced the Gospel, and the Jews had rejected it—

[The Gentiles, till they heard the Gospel, were in a most deplorable state of wickedness[a]: nor did they, at least with very few exceptions, at all think of seeking after God. Having but little sense of their guilt, and no idea whatever of any way in which their guilt might be removed, they concerned not themselves about a future state. The sentiment of the great mass among them was, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." But, on the first proclamation of the Gospel to them, they received it gladly, and experienced, throughout all the Roman Empire, its saving benefits. Thus was fulfilled in them that prophecy, "I am sought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that sought me not[b]."

The Jews, on the other hand, many of them at least, had a considerable desire after a righteousness that should justify them before God: and they actually sought after such a righteousness, by conforming to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law. But through their undue attachment to that law, which was now fulfilled and abrogated in Christ Jesus, they set themselves against the Gospel, and thereby cut themselves off from all participation of its benefits. The offer of salvation, through the merits of another, was a stumbling-block to them: they thought, that if they observed the duties of the moral law, and compensated for their defects by a strict attention to the ceremonial law, all would be well: and being persuaded of this, they would not hear of a salvation, which dispensed with the observances on which they placed so great a dependence. *It was to this alone, and not to any secret and irresistible decrees of God*, that they were thus left to perish. Thus it was that the Gentiles embraced the Gospel, and were saved by it; whilst the Jews, with all their superior advantages, rejected it, and perished.]

But this fact only verified what had been long since predicted by the Prophets—

[Christ had been represented as "a foundation-stone," on which whosoever should build should live for ever[c]. On the other

[a] See Rom. i. throughout. [b] Isai. lxv. 1. [c] Isai. xxviii. 16.

other hand, he had been represented as a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, over which many would fall to their heavier condemnation[d]. Thus the very Scriptures that announced his advent, declared that he should be "set for the fall, as well as for the rising again, of many *in Israel*[e]." This, if viewed abstractedly, was a very improbable event: for, however he might be disregarded by the Gentiles, the probability was, that the Jews, of whose nation he was, who expected his advent, and, from their own prophecies, might have learned his character; who actually saw all his miracles, and heard all his discourses; who, moreover, were assured on the most infallible testimony respecting his resurrection from the dead; who saw also the very same miracles wrought by his followers as had before been wrought by himself; I say, the probability was, that the Jews would have immediately become his most devoted followers. But the conduct of this infatuated people was altogether contrary to all such expectations; and they fulfilled the prophecies which they did not understand.]

Such was the fact stated by St. Paul. Let us now attend to,

II. The instruction to be gathered from it—

Surely, in this fact, we may see the following truths;

1. That how earnest soever we may be after salvation, we never shall attain it, if we seek it in a self-righteous way—

[Some of the Jews, we know, were very earnest in their endeavours to fulfil their law. Paul's description of himself in his unconverted state, abundantly proves this[f]. So at this time many are very studious to approve themselves to God, according to the light that is in them: but they know not in what way to come to him. They do not see the nature and extent of the moral law; which, having been once violated, can never justify an immortal soul[g]. They do not see that there is a new and living way opened for them into the Holy of Holies by the sacrifice of the Son of God[h]. They know not what our blessed Lord has so plainly told them, "I am the Way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me[i]." But we must declare to all such persons, that they are fatally deluded: "their zeal is not according to knowledge:" whilst they go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and refuse to submit to the righteousness

[d] Isai. viii. 14, 15. [e] Luke ii. 34. [f] Phil. iii. 5, 6.
[g] Gal. iii. 10. [h] Heb. x. 19, 20. [i] John xiv. 6.

eousness provided for them by God, they cut themselves off from all the blessings of the Gospel[k]. Nor is it only by an avowed reliance on their works alone that they bring this evil on themselves: they do it with equal certainty by blending their own works in *any* measure, or in *any* degree, with the merits of Christ[l]——— Know then, all of you, that, if ever ye would be partakers of Christ and of his salvation, you must seek to be found in Christ, not relying in any respect on your own righteousness, but trusting altogether in his alone[m]——— If you would gain the prize, you must not only strive, but "strive lawfully," according to the rules that have been prescribed[n].]

2. That how regardless soever we have been about salvation hitherto, we shall attain to it the very instant we believe in Christ—

[The Gentiles at large give us a very just, but awful, picture of man's depravity: yet, when they were altogether dead, God "passed by them, and bade them live[o]." Thus, if his voice in the Gospel reach our ears, and enter into our hearts, we also shall live before him. There was no interval between the obedience of Zaccheus to the Saviour's call, and "the coming of salvation to his house." The converts on the day of Pentecost were justified, the very instant they believed; and in like manner shall "all who believe be justified from all things." The most perfect representation of this truth may be found in the ordinance of the brazen serpent which shadowed it forth. There was but one way of cure for all that were dying of wounds; and that was, a sight of the brazen serpent. On the other hand, there was no interval between their use of that remedy, and their experience of the cure. Thus, then, the Lord Jesus Christ says to us, "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth:" and, if we will in a full reliance on his word direct our eyes unto him, "we shall never be ashamed" of our hope———]

3. That how calumniated soever this way of salvation is, the very calumnies that are raised against it, attest its truth—

[We must not be understood to say, that the mere circumstance of any plan of salvation giving offence proves that plan to be true and Scriptural: for even the Gospel itself may be so crudely and injudiciously stated, as to give *just* offence: but this we say, that *any plan of salvation which gives no offence to self-righteous men, is certainly not of God.* Objections without

[k] Rom. x. 2—4. [l] Gal. v. 2, 4. with Rom. xi. 6.
[m] Phil. iii. 9. [n] 2 Tim. ii. 5.
[o] Ezek. xvi. 6. with Eph. ii. 4, 5.

without number were made against St. Paul's statements. When he said that salvation was altogether *of grace*, his enemies replied, that in that case God must be partial and unjust. When he said it was *by faith*, then they replied, that he dispensed with good works. The same objections even to this hour are universally brought against the same statements: and we may be infallibly sure, that, if no objections of the same kind be urged against us, we do not state the Gospel as Paul did: we are accommodating ourselves to the pride and prejudice of an ignorant world, instead of preaching the Gospel as freely and as fully as we ought. Let none then be discouraged, when they hear the Gospel evil spoken of; neither let them wonder if it be "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness," as in the days of old. It is so, and it must be so, as long as man shall continue unhumbled before God: and if you find it so amongst the circle in which you move, know that, *as far as that circumstance goes*, it is no proof whatever that what you hear is erroneous, but a strong presumptive evidence, that the word you hear is the very truth of God, the same glorious salvation which Paul preached. Only be truly willing to have God exalted, and your own souls humbled in the dust before him, and then you will find, that the Gospel offers you precisely such a remedy as you want, and that "it is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe."]

DCCCCXXXII.

PAUL'S LOVE TO HIS BRETHREN.

Rom. x. 1. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*

TO seek the salvation of our fellow-creatures is but an unthankful office. The intimations which we are obliged to give them respecting their guilt and danger, are considered by them as uncharitable censures, rather than as friendly admonitions; and thus we call forth only the resentment of those, whose eternal interests we are most anxious to promote. St. Paul, who was most abundant in labours for the salvation of his brethren, experienced, beyond all others, their hatred and contempt. Aware that this would be the effect of his exertions, he was always studious to counteract it; and scarcely ever mentioned an offensive truth, without testifying, by some following

following observations, that it was dictated by love. Throughout the whole Epistle to the Romans, this appears in a very striking light. Having shewn, in the 2d chapter, that the Jews, notwithstanding their being in covenant with God by circumcision, were as much in need of salvation as the idolatrous and abandoned Gentiles, he corrects the apparent severity of his remarks, by saying, "What advantage then hath the Jew? Much every-way[a]." Proceeding afterwards to shew that the law could not justify any man, and fearing that he might on that account be thought an enemy to the law, he removes all ground for that suspicion; "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law[b]." Comparing afterwards his connexion with the law to the state of a woman that has lost her husband, who is therefore at liberty to be married to another; and observing, that sin took occasion from the law itself to bring forth fruit unto death; he guards them against imagining that he meant thereby to cast any reflection upon the law, as though it was itself sinful: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid[c]." Having yet further, in the prosecution of his argument, asserted, that the incapacity of the law to save men was the reason of God's sending his own Son to save them, he (after some enlargement on this subject) appeals to God in the most solemn manner, that, instead of speaking these things from any ill will to his Jewish brethren, he "could wish himself even accursed from Christ for them," if by that means they might be saved[d]. Thus also, in the passage before us, having shewn that the Gentiles were admitted into the Church and made partakers of salvation, while the Jews were cast out, he assures them that nothing could be more adverse to his wishes than this awful dispensation; "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

The same caution would we also use in ministering to

[a] Rom. ii. 28, 29. with iii. 1, 2. [b] Rom. iii. 28. with ib. 31.
[c] Rom. vii. 1—6. with ib. 7. [d] Rom. viii. 3. with ix. 1—5.

to you the Gospel of Christ. We are of necessity obliged to declare to you many unwelcome truths: but God knoweth, that our only motive in declaring them is, to benefit and save your souls; and that, while *that* is the object of our public ministrations, it is also the frequent subject of our secret prayers.

Let us, in elucidating our text, consider,

I. What it was that the Apostle desired in their behalf—

St. Paul had no wish to proselyte men to a party, or to procure followers to himself—

His object was to "save" them—

[Salvation comprehends not only a deliverance from all the penal effects of sin, but a restoration to the favour and image of God, and an exaltation to all the glory and felicity of heaven — — —

This is the greatest of all blessings. The concerns of time and sense are of no value in comparison of it: yea, crowns, kingdoms, worlds, are lighter than vanity itself — — — *It is a blessing which all equally stand in need of.* There is no man that is not a sinner before God, and therefore no man that is not exposed to his everlasting displeasure. Though men may differ with respect to the degrees of their guilt, there is no difference whatever with respect to their liableness to the wrath of God, and their need of his saving mercy — — —. *It is a blessing, without which existence itself will prove a curse.* If those who did not partake of it could be annihilated, or if there were a purgatory, where those who die unprepared for it may be rendered fit to enjoy it, we might account our present life a blessing. But there are two states, in the one or other of which all must be fixed for ever: and they who enjoy not the felicity of heaven, must endure for ever the miseries of hell. Let us consider for a moment what those miseries are, and we shall need nothing more to shew us the value of salvation — — —]

This object lay near his heart, and called forth his most earnest exertions—

[He was not contented to obtain salvation himself: he was anxious for the welfare of his fellow-creatures, and laid to heart their interests, as though they were his own — — — Nor did he rest satisfied with good wishes and desires: he laboured with incredible assiduity and self-denial, suffering all things cheerfully, not excepting imprisonments and death itself,

itself, for the advancement of their happiness[e]——— In secret also did he "labour fervently for them in prayer night and day." He knew the efficacy of intercession; and therefore besought God, with strong crying and tears, to take the veil from their hearts, and to enlighten them with the saving knowledge of his truth———]

For our own information, it will be proper to inquire,

II. In what way he directed them to seek it—

The whole Epistle to the Romans was written with the express view of setting forth the way of salvation. It shews at large that we are fallen and ruined creatures; that God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world to redeem us; and that all who would be saved, must seek for mercy through his meritorious blood and righteousness. But in a more peculiar and emphatical manner did he urge these truths in that part from whence our text is taken.

He shewed them that they must found all their hopes on Christ alone—

[Consult *the preceding context.* There he states a matter of fact well known to all; namely, that the idolatrous and abandoned Gentiles, who had never thought about salvation, had been prevailed upon to seek after it, and had actually attained it, because they were willing to accept it in God's appointed way, by faith in Christ alone: whereas the Jews, who had shewn considerable attention to the concerns of their souls, had failed of attaining salvation, because they disdained to seek it in this way.[f] He tells them, that this fact agreed with the prophecies, which actually foretold this very event, and declared (many hundred years before) that Christ would thus become a stumbling-block to that self-righteous people.

The same he sets forth also in *the following context.* He confesses that his Jewish brethren had a zeal to serve God; but it was a mistaken zeal. In three things they fatally erred: they were ignorant of the plan which God had devised for justifying sinners; they were seeking to establish a righteousness of their own, by which they might be justified before him; and when a better righteousness was proposed to them, even the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, they would not trust in it, or submit to be saved in such an humiliating way. That these were errors, even the law itself might teach them; for "Christ was the end of the law for righteousness:" He

[e] 2 Cor. xi. 23—29. 2 Tim. ii. 10. [f] Rom. ix. 30—33.

He was the very object to whom both the ceremonial and moral law directed them, for the obtaining of such a righteousness as should justify them before God: and this righteousness they were to obtain by faith in him. The *moral* law shut them up to this method of obtaining salvation, because it denounced nothing but curses against every one that had violated it even in a single instance[g]: and the *ceremonial* law taught them to look to that Great Sacrifice which Christ was in due time to offer for the sins of the whole world[h].

Thus plainly did he direct them unto Christ, as their only, and all-sufficient Saviour.]

In pointing them thus to Christ, he did most effectually consult their everlasting welfare—

[The way of salvation by faith in Christ is *plain*, *suitable*, *safe*, and *glorious*. Nothing can be more *plain*. Suppose a person about to be imprisoned for debt has that debt discharged by a surety; he will see as clear as the light what is the true ground of his deliverance. Such then is the deliverance which we have by Christ———And this way of salvation is *suitable*. If you were to propose any other method whatever, it would be altogether unsuitable for fallen man———but this is suited to the greatest of sinners; and that too even in their dying hour———How *safe* it is, must appear to all who consider that Christ is God equal with the Father; that he assumed our nature, and died upon the cross, on purpose to make atonement for us; and that the promise and oath of Jehovah are pledged for the acceptance of all who truly believe in Christ———And *glorious* will it be found to all eternity, inasmuch as all the perfections of the Deity are honoured by it, and the happiness of all that shall be saved is enhanced by it beyond all calculation or conception———]

ADDRESS,

1. Those who are careless about their souls—

[We are bound to desire and pray for your salvation: and we hope that in some small measure we can adopt respecting you the language of the text. But you must desire salvation, and pray to God for it yourselves; or else it will be in vain ever to expect it. We appeal to you, Whether God *will* or *can* bestow it upon those who are too proud to ask for it, and too thoughtless to desire it?]

2. Those who are seeking salvation, but in a mistaken way—

[Do not think it sufficient that you desire to be saved; or that

[g] Gal. iii. 10, 23, 24. [h] ver. 2—4.

that you are zealous in seeking after salvation. The Jews were not only zealous in their way, but confident that they were right; and yet never attained the object of their pursuit. Remember, you *must* be humbled; you *must* be contrite; you *must* rely on Christ alone.———]

3. Those who have obtained mercy of the Lord—

[While we desire, and pray to God for, the salvation of others, we rejoice and bless our God for you. We consider the prosperity of your souls as the richest recompence of our labours. Ye have "received Christ Jesus the Lord:" see to it then that ye "walk in him," and "abide in him," and "cleave unto him with full purpose of heart."]

DCCCCXXXIII.

CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Rom. x. 4. *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

ZEAL, if directed to a good object, is highly commendable: as the Apostle says, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." In reference to the concerns of religion, it is indispensably necessary for all who would approve themselves to God: "Whatever our hand findeth to do, we should do it with our might." But in proportion to its value when operating in a good cause, is the danger of it, when engaged on the side of error. This appears from the havoc which Paul in his unconverted state made of the Christian Church; purely from a desire to render, as he thought, an acceptable service to the Lord. Such, alas! is yet the zeal of too many: it is well-intentioned, but blind, and ignorant, and injurious: nevertheless, such a zeal, conscientiously exercised, at all times deserves respect, and should be treated with respect even by those who suffer from it. The conduct of the Apostle towards the unbelieving Jews was, in this point of view, worthy of universal imitation. He was constrained to tell them that they were in error, and that their error was replete with danger to their souls: but he told them of it in terms as conciliatory as love could dictate, or language

language could afford. He assured them, that they were objects of his tenderest regard, and that he felt the deepest anxiety for their welfare. He even bare testimony in their behalf, that, in the zeal they manifested, they had an unfeigned desire to serve God: but unhappily they were mistaken in their views of the Mosaic law, which was never intended to afford them a justifying righteousness, but was designed rather to lead them to that very Jesus whom they so hated and despised, and who was indeed "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

The information here given to them is of vital importance to every Child of man. To place it in a just point of view, we propose to shew,

I. What is that righteousness which God has provided for fallen man—

In the verse preceding our text, mention is twice made of "the righteousness of God;" by which expression we are *not* to understand *that attribute of the Deity which we call righteousness*, but *that way of obtaining righteousness and salvation which God has provided for sinful men*. In this sense the expression is used in other parts of this Epistle, especially in the third chapter; where it is said, "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is unto all, and upon all, them that believe[a]." But,

What kind of a righteousness is this?

[However much God may graciously desire the salvation of men, we cannot for a moment imagine, that for the attainment of it he will disregard the claims, and violate the rights, of justice, or holiness, or truth. We may be sure, that, if he has provided a righteousness for man, that righteousness will be found consistent with all his perfections, and with the honour of his moral government. How such a righteousness could be devised, was far beyond the reach of finite wisdom to conceive: but God's wisdom is infinite; and he has, by the substitution of his own Son in the place of sinners, provided precisely such a righteousness as was worthy of God, and suited

[a] Rom. iii. 21, 22.

suited to the necessities of man. The law required obedience, and denounced death as the penalty of one single transgression. Man transgressed its commands, and became obnoxious to its curse. Before he could be restored to the favour of his God, the penalty must be inflicted, and the obedience paid. But this was impossible for man to do, seeing that the penalty was everlasting death; and man was despoiled of all power to do the will of God. Therefore God was pleased to send his co-equal, co-eternal Son into the world, that, as man's substitute, he might endure the curse which we had merited, and render the obedience which we owed. Thus, by this wonderful contrivance, every obstacle to man's salvation is removed. Must the penalty denounced against sin be inflicted? It has been inflicted on God's only dear Son. Must the law be fulfilled in all its extent? It has been fulfilled to the uttermost by him. So that to those who have him for their surety, there is a plea in arrest of judgment; a plea, which God himself will admit, as just, and adequate, and perfectly consistent with his own honour.]

And where shall we find this righteousness?

[It is treasured up for us in Christ Jesus; who, having been sent into the world, "to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness[b]," executed the work assigned him: and, being now constituted the Head of his Church, and having all fulness of spiritual blessings treasured up in him for our use, he imparts this righteousness to every one who truly believes in him. Indeed, he is himself made righteousness unto them; as St. Paul has said, "He is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness[c]." This shews how we are to understand that declaration of the prophet Jeremiah, "This is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS[d]." We are not merely to compliment our Saviour with this title, but really and truly to rely upon him in this particular view, as possessing in himself all that righteousness whereby we are to be justified, and as imparting it to all, who are united to him by faith. In a word, we must all "look unto him in order to obtain salvation," and with an express recollection, that all which we have is not in ourselves, but in him, "we must say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength[e]."]

What an agreement there is between the Old and the New Testament in relation to this righteousness, will appear, whilst we shew,

II. How the law itself directs us to it—

Had

[b] Dan. ix. 24. [c] 1 Cor. i. 30. [d] Jer. xxiii. 6.
[e] Isai. xlv. 22, 24.

Had the Jews understood the true import of their own law, they would never have rejected Christ: for he was the very scope and end,

1. Of the moral law—

[The law, when given to man in innocence, was intended to justify him, if he had continued to obey it to the termination of the period destined for his probation. But when once he had fallen, there was no possibility of his ever obtaining justification by it. We, as partakers of his guilt and corruption, are in the same predicament with him: "in him we have died;" and, if ever we obtain life, we must seek it in the way pointed out to him, even in that "Seed of the woman that was in due time to bruise the serpent's head." St. Paul tells us, that, "if there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law[f]." But this being impossible, since man in his fallen state could not fulfil it, nor could God, consistently with his own holiness, relax its demands, God re-published it from Mount Sinai, to shew unto men how greatly they had departed from it, and to drive them by its terrors to that Refuge which he had prepared for them. That these were the true ends for which the law was given, is expressly asserted: St. Paul puts the question, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" And he answers it by saying, that "it was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made." It was given to convince them of their transgressions, to stop their mouths with a sense of their guilt and misery[g]; and to "shut them up unto the faith that should afterwards be revealed." In a word, instead of ever being given to afford a ground of hope to men by their obedience to it, it was intended "to be *a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith*[h]." How it effected this, may be seen in the apostle Paul, whose hopes it utterly destroyed, and whom it constrained to seek acceptance through Christ alone[i].]

2. Of the ceremonial law—

[This, it is true, was appointed to make an atonement for sins, so far as to screen the transgressor from the penalties that were to be inflicted by the Civil Magistrate. But it never really took away sin: "it was not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins[j]." The annual repetition of the same sacrifices shewed, that "they could not make a man perfect as pertaining to the conscience:" they were, in fact, only "remembrances of sins made every year," in order to

[f] Gal. iii. 21. [g] Gal. iii 19. with Rom. iii. 19, 20.
[h] Gal. iii. 22—24. [i] Rom. vii. 9. [j] Heb. x. 4.

to direct men to that Great Sacrifice, which should in due time be offered, and which alone could effect reconciliation for us with our offended God[k]. The very circumstance of the ceremonial law making no provision for the expiation of presumptuous sin, shewed, that it could not answer the necessities of fallen man[l]. Hence the Apostle tells us, that the law was only "a shadow of good things to come[m];" a shadow, of which Christ was the body[n]. Agreeably to this, the most noted types of Christ are expressly applied to him, as having in his own person fulfilled their office, and abrogated their use. The paschal lamb proclaimed to Israel, that unless their houses were sprinkled with its blood, they would fall by the sword of the destroying angel: and St. Paul says to us, that "Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us[o]." Again; the lamb offered every morning and evening in sacrifice, we are told, shadowed forth the Lord Jesus Christ, as the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world[p]," even that "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world[q]." In a word, all the sacrifices proclaim to us this truth, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission."

Thus it appears, that neither the moral nor ceremonial law could provide us with any righteousness wherein we might stand before God; but that both the one and the other directed us to Christ, "in whom alone all the seed of Israel can be justified, and in whom alone they must glory[r]."]

But it remains yet to be inquired,

III. In what way we are to be made partakers of it—

In reference to this there exist amongst us, even as among the Jews, the most fatal mistakes.

The great mass of those who feel a concern about their souls, seek for righteousness by the works of the law—

[As for those who really think that their own works have such an exalted merit in them, as to deserve heaven of themselves without any reference whatever to Christ, we would fondly hope, that they are very rarely to be found amongst us. But there are two ways in which men, whilst they profess some reliance upon Christ, do in reality make their own works the foundation of their hopes; namely, by looking for salvation *by their works for Christ's sake*, or *by Christ for their works' sake*. There are a great many shades of difference between persons who may be arranged under these two heads, and many nice distinctions have been drawn in

[k] Heb. ix. 9, 10. & x. 3, 4. [l] Numb. xv. 30. [m] Heb. x. 1.
[n] Col. ii. 17. [o] 1 Cor. v. 17. [p] Rev. xiii. 8.
[q] John i. 29. [r] Isai. xlv. 25.

in order to shew the various delusions which men harbour in their minds in reference to this subject: but all the different classes may be safely reduced to these two.

Let us pause a moment, to consider whether we ourselves do not belong to one or other of them.

There are many who, as we have said, seek salvation *by their works for Christ's sake.* They will not go so far as to say, that Christ has done nothing for man's salvation: on the contrary, they think that they are much indebted to him; for that to him they owe it, that their imperfect obedience shall be accepted for their justification before God. They do indeed suppose that their repentance, their reformation of life, their alms-deeds, and their attendance on Divine ordinances, will procure to them the favour of God: but then it is not because these things are absolutely meritorious, so as to deserve and purchase heaven; but because the Lord Jesus Christ has procured a relaxation of the perfect law of God, and obtained for them that their sincere obedience shall be accepted instead of perfect obedience. And, if their obedience should not be altogether sufficient for the desired end, they expect he will add a portion of his merits to theirs, so that there shall be no deficiency upon the whole.

But a very little knowledge of God's perfect law is sufficient to dispel this fatal delusion. The law neither is mitigated, nor can be mitigated: it never can require less than it did. It required of man to love God with all his heart and mind, and soul, and strength, and to love his neighbour as himself. But from which of these has God released us? or from which, consistently with his own honour, can he release us? The law remains the same as ever it was, both in its requirements and its penalties: and, as our works never did, nor ever can, come up to its demands, it can never do any thing but denounce a curse against us, as long as we continue under it: as the Apostle says, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;" for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them[s]." Whilst therefore it curses us, it of course can never justify: nor can our defective obedience to it form any part of our justifying righteousness before God.

When men are driven from this refuge, they then flee to the other, of which we have spoken, and look for justification *by Christ for their works' sake.* They see that in Christ alone can be found such a righteousness as the law requires; and they now look to him as their righteousness. But yet they dare not go to him, as it were, with all their sins upon them: they think they must wash themselves first with the tears of penitence,

[s] Gal. iii. 10.

tence, and make some compensation for their past iniquities by newness of life; and then they hope that he will accept them, and present them faultless before his heavenly Father. And if they cannot see in themselves such a measure of penitence and reformation as they think necessary to recommend them to him, they dare not go to him: they think it would be presumption in them to trust in him: they cannot conceive how his mercy should extend to such wretches as they see themselves to be. On the other hand, if by much prayer and diligence they have attained some measure of the goodness which they are striving after, then, I say, they can go to him with courage, and feel a comfortable persuasion that he will accept them. Thus they found their hopes, not simply on his merits, but on some measure of goodness in themselves, which they carry with them as a price to purchase his favour. But the Scriptures tell us, that we must go to receive salvation at Christ's hands, "without money, and without price[t]:" that salvation must be wholly of grace, from first to last[u]: that we must go *without any work whatever*, to be "justified by him *as ungodly*[x]:" and that, if we attempt to carry to him any thing of our own, either as *a joint ground of our hope*, or as *a warrant for our hope*, in him, "he shall profit us nothing[y]."]

But we must be made partakers of Christ's righteousness solely and entirely by faith—

[This is asserted so strongly, and so frequently, that one can scarcely conceive how any one who has ever read the Scriptures should entertain a doubt of it. Nor is it asserted only, but maintained frequently, in a long course of argument in direct opposition to the Jewish notion of salvation by works[z]. The reasons for it also are stated again and again. Salvation "is by faith, that it may be by grace[a]." It is "by faith, lest any man should boast[b]." It is by faith, that the whole universe may glory in Christ alone[c]. But the reproof which Paul gave to Peter at Antioch puts this matter in the clearest light. Peter had preached to the Gentiles, salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Some Judaizing teachers, who, whilst they professed to believe in Christ, were zealous for the observance of the Mosaic law, coming thither, he feared to offend them; and, to ingratiate himself with them, he required the Gentiles to conform to some Mosaic rites to which they had never been before subjected, and from which the Jews themselves, had they known their liberty, were free. We are not told that Peter promised them salvation by these works: but he evidently taught them, that, though Christ was the

[t] Isai. lv. 1. [u] Rom. xi. 6. [x] Rom. iv 5.
[y] Gal. v. 2, 4. [z] Rom. iv. 1—14. [a] ib. ver. 16.
[b] Eph. ii. 8, 9. [c] 1 Cor. i. 31.

the only Saviour, they might recommend themselves to him, and confirm their interest in him, by the observance of these rites. Thus, in fact, he adulterated and undermined the Gospel, and endangered the eternal welfare of all his followers. On this account St. Paul blamed and reproved him before the whole Church: and the reprehension which he gave to Peter has been transmitted to us, that we may see of what importance it is to maintain the doctrine of salvation by faith, uncontaminated and undisguised. Hear the account which Paul himself gives of it: "When I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified[d]." This shews us, that nothing is to be blended with, and nothing to be added to, the faith of Christ; but that all who are justified, must be justified simply, and solely, by faith in Christ.

We must not be understood to say, that good works are not necessary *after* we are justified; for they are indispensably necessary, to prove the sincerity of our faith: but it is in reference to the matter of justification only that we now speak: and there they must be excluded altogether. Christ is our only righteousness: and it is by faith only that we can ever apprehend him.]

The whole state of the Apostle's argument in the passage before us, leads us to conclude with the following ADVICE:

1. Seek not to establish any righteousness of your own—

[Self-righteousness is deeply rooted in the heart of man. Its workings are numerous and subtle: and the danger arising from it is more than can be conceived. It robs God of his glory: it subverts the very foundations of the Gospel: it usurps the office of the Saviour: it invades the unalienable prerogatives of God. Do not think it a light sin. Do not hastily conclude that you are free from it. Search and try your hearts: see what is the ground of your hopes: see whether you are willing to go to Christ as the very chief of sinners; or whether you are wishing to find some worthiness in yourselves,

[d] Gal. ii. 14—16.

selves, that may serve as a ground of confidence in your approaches to him, and as a foundation of your hope of acceptance with him. For be assured, that if you stumble at this stumbling-stone, you will frustrate the grace of God, and cause the death of Christ, as far as respects yourselves, to be in vain[e].]

2. Submit humbly and cheerfully to the righteousness of Christ—

[Strange indeed is it that it should be any act of submission to believe in Christ: but it is in reality such a submission as our proud hearts are never brought to without much difficulty. We may see how a spirit of pride wrought in Naaman, when he was told by the Prophet to "wash in Jordan, and be clean." Had he been told to do some great thing, he would have complied immediately: but to "wash in Jordan" appeared to be so inadequate a remedy, that he would not condescend to try it. Thus, when we say to men, "Believe and be saved," we seem to propose to them a remedy of no value. Were we to lay down rules for them, and tell them what penances to inflict on themselves, and what services to perform in order to the purchasing of heaven, we should find them willing to undertake whatever we might prescribe. The very thought of being their own saviours would suffice to carry them through the greatest difficulties. But when we say to them, "Believe only, and ye shall be saved," they are ready, like Naaman, to "turn away in a rage." This however is what we are commissioned to say: and, *if an angel from heaven were to give you any direction contrary to that, he would be accursed*[f]. O let your hearts be humbled before God. Methinks, when Jesus said to the lepers, "Go and shew yourselves to the priests;" or, when to the blind man, "Go and wash in the pool of Siloam," they found no reluctance to comply. Why then should you? Can you cleanse your own leprosy? Can you open your own eyes? Can you effect your own salvation? No assuredly, you cannot. If any man could have saved himself, methinks, it was the apostle Paul. But he, disclaiming all thoughts of ever accomplishing such a work, "desired to be found in Christ, *not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ*[g]." Be ye, Brethren, like-minded with him; and then you may, like him, be "always triumphing in Christ;" and be assured, that, "when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory[h]."]

[e] Gal. ii. 21. [f] Gal. i. 8, 9. [g] Phil. iii. 9. [h] Col. iii. 4.

DCCCCXXXIV.

SALVATION BY CHRIST UNIVERSALLY TO BE PROCLAIMED.

Rom. x. 12—15. *There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him: for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written; How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

MEN, as sinners, need to be reminded from day to day, that there is a Saviour provided for them, and that the salvation wrought out by him, is offered freely to every Child of man. To declare this is the special work of the Ministry; which is therefore called, The Ministry of reconciliation, because the end and object of it is to proclaim this truth, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." In delivering this message, we sometimes appear to ourselves as in danger of wearying our audience by needless repetitions; but we check ourselves when we hear St. Paul apologizing for the same conduct in these words; "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous; but for you it is safe." We might diversify our subjects more, and thereby administer to the gratification of "itching ears:" but there is no subject in the universe of such vital importance as this; and therefore we most approve ourselves faithful to our high calling, when, like Paul, "we know nothing among you but Christ, and him crucified."

St. Paul, in all the preceding context, has shewn, that salvation is simply by faith in Christ: and that, in publishing it equally both to Jews and Gentiles, he had only done what Moses and the Prophets had done before him; and what must be done, if ever either Jews or Gentiles are to be made partakers of it.

The words which we have read will naturally lead us to set before you,

I. The

I. The way of salvation—

There is but one way of salvation for all mankind—

[As soon as ever sin entered into the world, the way of salvation by the works of the law was closed. From that day to this, "the flaming sword, once placed at the east of Eden, has prohibited all access to the tree of life," except that which was opened in the promise, that "the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head[a]." From that time, this way of salvation was shadowed forth in sacrifices, with the skins of which our first parents were clothed, to remind them, that they must be clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which alone could cover the shame of their nakedness from the eye of their offended God[b]. The Prophets all bare testimony to this same truth: Isaiah speaks of Jesus as that foundation which God has laid in Zion, and declares that whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed[c]:" and Joel, in the words quoted in our text, affirms, that "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved[d]."

These words deserve somewhat more of a distinct consideration. They refer beyond all doubt to the Messiah, and to the dispensation which he was to introduce. All the preceding context indisputably proves this[e]; and St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, expressly declares that they were fulfilled by the descent of the Holy Ghost to testify of Christ, and to convert souls to him[f]. But in the prophet Joel the person on whose name we are taught to call, is JEHOVAH: it is no subordinate Lord, but JEHOVAH himself: from whence we know assuredly, that the Lord Jesus Christ, who is there spoken of, is "Emmanuel, GOD with us." O blessed truth! He who was "a child born, a Son given, is the Mighty God," "God manifest in the flesh," "God over all, blessed for evermore[g]," HIM we are to invoke, and on him we are to rely, as "The Lord our righteousness:" and, if we do so in sincerity and truth, renouncing every other hope, we shall be saved: his righteousness shall justify us; his Spirit shall renew us; and his grace shall keep us, even to the end: "In him we shall be saved with an everlasting salvation: we shall not be ashamed or confounded world without end[h]."]

This salvation is equally free for all—

["There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek." This way of salvation existed before there was a Jew in the world;

[a] Gen. iii. 15, 24.
[b] ib. ver. 21. with Rom. iii. 22. & Rev. iii. 18.
[c] Isai. xxviii. 16. [d] Joel ii. 32. [e] ib. ver. 28—31.
[f] Acts ii. 16—21. [g] Isai. ix. 6. 1 Tim. iii. 16. Rom. ix. 5.
[h] Isai. xlv. 17.

world: and the only advantage which the Jews enjoyed, was, that this way of salvation was made known to them in types and shadows, when it was altogether forgotten by the world at large. This distinguishing mercy, however, made no difference as to the way in which they were to be saved: it afforded no new ground of hope to the Jew; it took not away any old ground of hope from the Gentile. If a Gentile, like Job or Melchizedec, looked to the Great Sacrifice that was in due time to be offered, he was saved by it, though he did not descend from the loins of Abraham: and, in like manner, now every creature in the universe who shall believe in Jesus, shall be saved by him: for "this same Lord over all (the Lord Jesus[1]) is rich unto *all* that call upon him:" there is no limitation, no exception whatever; for "*Whosoever* shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

Behold then in few words the way of salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ, who bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and "made reconciliation for us by the blood of his cross," is the one object of our faith and hope: and all who with humility and earnestness call upon him for salvation, shall surely find it, both in time and eternity.]

This salvation being designed for all, we cannot doubt,

II. The duty of diffusing universally the knowledge of it—

Without the instrumentality of human agents, it cannot be hoped that the knowledge of salvation should be spread throughout the earth—

[Doubtless God, if he pleased, might, as in the first creation, speak the word only, and there should be spiritual light throughout all the dark regions of the earth. But this is not the way in which God has ever wrought to any great extent; nor has he given us reason to expect that he ever will work in this way, for the conversion of those who are yet in darkness and the shadow of death. He has sent forth an order of men on purpose to preach his Gospel throughout the world. The Jews indeed could not endure this dispensation: they condemned with most inveterate malignity the Apostle's conduct in preaching to the Gentiles: but he asks them in our text, How the Gentiles ever could attain the knowledge of salvation, if it were not preached to them? The Apostle's argument is this: Ye Jews, know from your own Prophets, that salvation is confined to those "who call on the name of the Lord." I by inspiration know, that that Lord is the Lord Jesus

[1] Acts x. 36.

Jesus Christ. And now I ask, "How can the Heathen call on him of whom they have not heard? or how can they hear without a preacher?" This argument is incontrovertible: and we appeal to it as a complete vindication of all the efforts that are made by different Societies to diffuse the knowledge of salvation throughout the world.]

It is by this instrumentality that God himself has taught us to expect the wished for event—

[The words cited from the prophet Isaiah are undoubtedly to be understood in reference to the Gospel dispensation. They primarily indeed describe the joy occasioned among the captive Jews in Babylon, when they saw the Messenger hastening over the distant hills to bring them certain tidings of their redemption: but all the following context shews, that they refer to an event in which the whole world was interested, seeing that "God had made bare his arm in the eyes of all nations, and that all the ends of the earth were to see the salvation of God[k]."

Contemplate then the passage in this view. See the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts running over the mountains to proclaim salvation to a ruined world. Those who are unconscious of any bondage, may deride his folly for giving himself so much unnecessary trouble. But how would it be with those who saw themselves under a sentence of condemnation, and were expecting the executioner to inflict the judgment denounced against them? Would they not behold with interest his every step? Would not his every motion, as it were, appear lovely in their eyes? Would not the tidings produce on all who believed them, the effect once wrought on the liberated Grecians, who all night long rent the air with that cheering sound, "A Saviour, a Saviour"? Look at the converts on the day of Pentecost; and know assuredly, that if, like Peter, we will unite in extending the knowledge of the Gospel, thousands shall in due time arise to attest, and to rejoice in, the tidings we proclaim. Yes, "the Gospel of peace" will be received by them as "*glad tidings of good things*."]

Now, in CONCLUSION, we will call upon you,

1. To perform your duty—

[Let no Jewish prejudices or Heathen infidelity (both of which, alas! are but too prevalent amongst us) discourage you. You must expect, not only that they who feel no value for their own souls will frown at your attempts to convert the souls of others, but that persons who really mean well, yea, and some who are truly pious, may, on some account or other, not be able cordially to unite with you in the blessed work.

[k] Isai. lii. 7, 10.

work. But know, that the salvation of mankind is a work which every redeemed soul should labour to promote. We would not overlook indeed the things of minor importance: but we would not suffer them to stand in the way of such a work as this. What had become of the whole Gentile world, if the Apostles had waited till their unbelieving Brethren, or even the Judaizing Christians, had given their consent to have a free salvation offered to the Gentile world? Alas! we had been in darkness even until now. Labour then, beloved Brethren, in every possible way to promote the knowledge of salvation among both Jews and Gentiles, yea, and among those who, though they call themselves Christians, are so only in name and profession. Circulate the Scriptures in every language under heaven: send Missionaries to the ends of the earth; seek also to bring into the fold of Christ the lost sheep of the House of Israel: and whatever be the office to which your situation and circumstances appear to fit you, be ready to execute it: and, in answer to God's inquiry, "Who will go for us?" be ready to reply, "Here am I, Lord; send me."]

2. To enjoy your privileges—

[All the blessings of Salvation, if only you believe in Christ, are yours: yours is that peace of God which passeth all understanding: yours are all the treasures both of grace and glory; holiness is yours, as well as pardon; for the faith that brings you into a state of peace with God will "work by love," and "purify the heart." Ye are not straitened in your God: be not straitened in your own souls. Ask much; expect much; for your "Lord is rich unto all who call upon him." Set not limits, either to the objects of his bounty, or the riches of his grace; for his riches are unsearchable; and they are promised indiscriminately to all who call upon him. What a blessed word is that, "*Whosoever!*" Here is no limitation, no exception: all that is required of us is, to believe in Christ, and to call upon him. Oh! call upon him day and night: be earnest; be importunate; wrestle with him, as Jacob did; and let him not go, until you have received his blessing. Well I know how unbelief is apt to interpose between him and your souls. You will be ready perhaps to say, "True; but I fear I do not call aright." Ah! Brethren, this is a device of the enemy to rob you of the blessings which Christ is ready to bestow. If you call not on him as you would, still call upon him as you can: lie at the foot of his cross: *trust* in him: if you cannot trust, then *hope* in him: in a word, *look* unto him, renouncing every other ground of hope; and fear not but that he will make all grace abound towards you; and that what he has begun in time, he will perfect in eternity.]

DCCCCXXXV.

CHRIST MADE KNOWN TO THE GENTILES.

Rom. x. 20, 21. *Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest to them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

IT is scarcely to be conceived to what a degree prejudice will close both the eyes and ears of men against the plainest truths. Nothing could be plainer than the avowed purpose and determination of God to cast off the Jews in the event of their continued impenitence, and to admit the Gentiles to a participation of those privileges of which the Jews in the first instance had the exclusive enjoyment. Moses had declared it in the most direct terms; that "God would provoke the Jews to jealousy by those who were not a people, and by a foolish nation he would anger them:" the plain import of which was, that he would transfer his favours to the Gentiles, in case the Jews should continue to abuse them. But Isaiah, as my text expresses it, was very bold; affirming in a way of prophetical anticipation, that God was already found of the Gentiles, to whom his Gospel, so long slighted by the Jews, was now proclaimed[a]. Yet strong as these assertions were, the Jews could not for a moment admit the idea, that the Gentiles should be admitted to a participation of their privileges. But St. Paul assures them, that so it had been determined many centuries before, and, in fact, that so it had been done.

In discoursing on the predictions here cited, we shall consider them,

I. As prophecies fulfilled—

In them we see,

1. God's promise to the Gentiles—

[The Gentiles are here plainly designated. They "sought not God, nor asked after him" at all: they were altogether ignorant of God, and unconcerned about him. They did not

[a] See Isai. lxv. 1, 2.

not regard the notices of him which were visible in all the works of his hands. They were contented to live without him in the world; and so far did they put him from them, that "he was not in all their thoughts."

Yet to these was God now made known in the person of his Son: the glad tidings of Salvation had been proclaimed to them; the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon them; and Christ, in all his fulness, and in all his glory, had been revealed in their hearts. God had now been found of them, not as a Creator merely, but as a Saviour; a Father, a Friend, a Portion, "an everlasting great Reward." Though they had been in darkness and the shadow of death during all the time that God had made himself known to the Jews, yet at last "the light had risen upon them, and God's glory was seen upon them." "As soon as they heard him, they obeyed his call;" and within a few years from the publication of the Gospel to them, such multitudes became obedient to the faith, that they filled, as it were, every part of the Roman Empire; so gloriously was the prediction fulfilled in the eyes of the whole world.]

2. His complaint of the Jews—

[For two thousand years had the Jews been the Lord's peculiar people, the sole depositories of his revealed will, the only visible monuments of his saving grace. During all this time had God stretched out his hands to them with more than parental tenderness and affection, intreating them to accept his overtures of mercy, and urging them not to put away from them the blessings which he of his own sovereign love had prepared for them. He had assured them, that in and through their Messiah they should possess all the blessings both of grace and glory. He had spared no pains to draw them to himself. He had wrought such miracles for them as had never been wrought for any other people from the foundation of the world. He had loaded them with benefits without number, given them his statutes, his ordinances, his Sabbaths, and sent from time to time his Prophets to instruct and warn them. In short, every thing that could be done for his vineyard, he had done in it.

But how had they requited all this unbounded love? Had they turned to him? had they loved, and served, and glorified him? No: from the beginning they had been "a disobedient and gainsaying people." Hear how God complains of them by the prophet Jeremiah[b] ——— But the most perfect contrast between his tenderness towards them and their obstinacy will be found in their treatment of Hezekiah's messengers, when he sent them through the whole land to intreat and importune

[b] Jer. xxxv. 13, 15.

importune them to return to God[c] ——— (Mark *the extreme tenderness* with which God here "stretches out his hands to them.") And how did they receive these gracious communications? "Hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth!" they "*laughed* the messengers *to scorn*, and *mocked* them." Thus did they also in the days of Christ and his Apostles; they were always "disobedient, always gainsaying" and opposing every thing that was said or done for their welfare; till at last, by their "contradictions and blasphemies," they constrained the apostle Paul to turn from them, and to execute without any further reserve the commission he had received to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles[d] ——— With what a different spirit the Gentiles received these tidings was immediately made manifest: "*they* heard the Apostle with gladness, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many of them as were ordained to eternal life, believed[e]."

Thus, in reference both to Jews and Gentiles, was this prophecy clearly and undeniably fulfilled.]

But it will be proper to view these prophecies,

II. As events yet daily accomplishing—

Verily God is yet found of those who sought him not—

[We speak not now of men's conduct *after* they have received the grace of God; for no man who has been made partaker of God's grace can possibly neglect to seek him. But the question is, Whence arose their good desires? were they of themselves, or of God? Let this be answered from our *Liturgy*: "O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed." Yes, it is "God, who of his own good pleasure gives us both to will and to do;" or, as our Article expresses it, "who worketh in us, that we may have a good will, and worketh with us when we have that good will." And here we will appeal to every humble mind, to every one that has found the Saviour in truth; What was your state when God first stirred you up to seek him? Were you not careless and unconcerned, or, at least, resting in a mere form of godliness, without any experience of its power? Did you apprehend him, before he apprehended you? Did you love him, before he loved you? Did you choose him, before he chose you? A proud Pharisee may arrogate to himself the glory, and say, that he made himself to differ: but so will not any one who is really taught of God. The true Christian will say with Paul, "It was not I, but the grace of God that was with me." Wherever there is one really united to Christ by faith, and washed in his blood, and renewed by his

[c] 2 Chron. xxx. 6—9. [d] Acts xiii. 44—47. [e] ib. ver. 48.

his Spirit, there is one who will say from his inmost soul, "By the grace of God I am what I am."]

On the other hand, thousands who are sought by God with all imaginable tenderness, yet continue in a state of wilful and obstinate disobedience—

[This is the case with the generality of those who bear the name of Christ. God comes to them by his providence, his word, his Spirit, and seeks to turn them to himself; but they pull away the shoulder, and refuse to "hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely." For how many years has God been striving with some amongst us, who yet continue alienated from the life of God through the blindness and hardness of their hearts! Think, in what diversified ways he has dealt with us, in order that he might fulfil in us his good pleasure, and accomplish in us the rich purposes of his grace! From the first moment that reason began to expand and operate, he began also to work upon our consciences, and to draw us by the influences of his Spirit. Say, ye who are now in the vigour of youth, or grown to man's estate, whether ye cannot call to remembrance many interpositions of the Deity, when he sought to stop you in your career of sin, and to bring you to repentance? And ye who are advanced in life, say, Whether every year that has been added to your lives has not brought with it much additional ground for God's indignation against you! Behold then, the conduct of the Jews is yet realized and renewed in us: and the Lord Jesus Christ has reason to repeat over us the complaint once poured forth over the disobedient Jews, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings! but ye would not." Yes, at the day of judgment shall this be our condemnation, "I would; but ye would not."]

There is yet a further point of view in which these prophecies may be considered; namely,

III. As truths illustrative to the whole economy of Salvation—

The Gospel is altogether a dispensation of grace—

[This is its most distinguishing feature: it is a plan devised and ordained of God for the displaying of "the exceeding riches of his grace." Every thing that God has bestowed upon fallen man, in relation to it, has been unsought, and unsolicited. We may see the whole exemplified in our first parent Adam. When he fell, did he cry to God for mercy? Did he ask for a Saviour? Did he implore such measures of grace as might restore him to the Divine image? No: instead

of

of "seeking after" God, or even asking of God whether there were any possibility of ever being restored to his favour, he fled from God, and hid himself; and, when called forth from his hiding-place, he cast the blame of his transgression on God himself. This shews us what every man by nature does, and would continue to do, if God, of his own grace and mercy, did not infuse into his mind a better disposition. Man in his fallen state is dead, "dead in trespasses and sins:" he is like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision, till God breathes upon him, and bids him live. Nay, he would revert to that state again, if God did not uphold him every moment. In vain would be all his past experience of redeeming love, if Christ, in whom his life is hid, were not constantly to impart more grace to him, and grace sufficient for his multiplied necessities.

Brethren, it is to this state of conscious and willing dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ that we wish you to be brought: this is what the Apostle calls "living by faith on the Son of God." This alone answers the end of the Gospel dispensation: this alone honours God, or can bring solid peace into the soul. We pray you to seek this "spirit of faith," and to abound in it more and more ——— To the Lord Jesus Christ must you give glory from first to last: it was He who opened your heart, as he did Lydia's of old, to attend to the concerns of your souls; and He, who was "the Author of your faith, must also be the Finisher." Regard him in this view; and live upon him in this view; and give him glory in this view: and the more grateful your acknowledgments to him, the more abundant will be his communications to you, both in time and in eternity.]

But those who partake not of this grace have themselves only to blame—

[God "willeth not the death of any sinner, but rather that he come to repentance and live." He even condescends, for our encouragement, to declare this upon oath: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live." And then he further confirms this by the kindest and most affectionate intreaties; "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O House of Israel?" Let no man think to excuse himself by saying, "If God give me not his grace, how can I help myself? For God offers his grace to every man freely: "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come to the waters; come buy wine and milk, without money and without price!" Our blessed Lord gave a similar invitation; "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; and out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." In like manner,

in

in the book of Revelation it is written, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come: and whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." What will ye say after such invitations as these? Will ye say, We *cannot?* If ye do, we will tell you, beforehand, our blessed Lord's reply, "Ye *will not* come unto me, that ye may have life."

You are to "seek him: and then he will be found of you." "Seek, and ye shall find," is a rule to *you*, though it is not to *God*. *He* may dispense his blessings to whomsoever he will, and under whatever circumstances: but *you* must seek his blessings; and, if you seek them not, you must abide the consequences. What those consequences will be, ye may judge from the Jews. Has not God punished them at last? "Go to Shiloh, and see what he did to them there:" go to Judea, and see how his anger has burned against them there: look at them in every quarter of the globe; and know, that, as he has scattered them, so will he fulfil his threatenings upon you: and when he shall say, "Bring hither those mine enemies, and slay them before me," ye will be silent, not having a word to say in arrest of judgment. Be prevailed on then to seek his face, yea, to seek him with your whole hearts. Take encouragement from the patience he has already exercised towards you, and "account his long-suffering to be salvation." Be assured, that at this moment he waiteth to be gracious unto you; and that if you will only be content to "go on your way weeping, bearing precious seed, ye shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you," even an everlasting harvest of felicity and glory.]

DCCCCXXXVI.

THE LORD'S PEOPLE A CHOSEN REMNANT.

Rom. xi. 5. *Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant, according to the election of grace.*

IT is the part both of wisdom and of love to guard our statements against misconception. We are of necessity constrained sometimes to state truth in strong and general terms: but in all such cases it becomes us to anticipate, and to remove, as much as in us lies, all occasion for misapprehension or mistake: we should make every thing so clear, that the ignorant should have nothing to ask; the captious nothing to object. St. Paul was ever alive to this duty:

duty: he foresaw and answered every objection that could be urged against the truths he maintained. He had in the preceding chapter spoken of the Gentiles as adopted into God's family, whilst the Jews, for their obstinate disobedience, were cast off. Hence it might have been supposed, that God had cast off his people altogether: but he tells them, that this was not the case; for that he himself, though a Jew, was a partaker of all the blessings of salvation: and that, as in the days of Elijah, there were among the Jews more faithful servants of Jehovah than was supposed, so it was at that time; "there was a remnant," and a considerable remnant too, "according to the election of grace."

We will,

I. Shew that God's people are "a chosen remnant"—

The Lord has at this day a remnant of faithful people—

[In every age of the world there have been some faithful worshippers of Jehovah. Even in the ante-diluvian world, when all flesh had so corrupted their way that God determined to destroy them utterly, there was one pious man, who boldly protested against the reigning abominations, and, with his family, was saved from the universal deluge. Abraham, Melchizedec, and Lot, were also rare instances of piety in a degenerate age; as were also Job, and his little band of friends. In Israel too, even under the impious and tyrannic reign of Ahab, there was an Elijah, who was a bold and faithful witness for his God. Thus at this day also there are some who serve their God with fidelity and zeal. Neither the example of the multitude, nor the menaces of zealots, can induce them to bow down to Baal, or "to walk after the course of a corrupt world." "They are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world;" "nor will they conform to it" in its spirit and conduct: they will "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but will rather reprove them." To serve, to enjoy, to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, is all their desire; and they "cleave unto him with full purpose of heart."]

They are however but a remnant—

["The world at large lieth in wickedness." The broad road that leadeth to destruction is crowded; whilst those who enter in at the strait gate, and walk in the narrow way that leadeth

leadeth unto life, are few[a]. True it is, that the servants of God may now, as in Elijah's days, be more numerous than we imagine: there may be many, who, being remote from public ordinances, are unknown; or, from being poor, are unobserved; or, from peculiar diffidence, are kept from joining themselves to the Lord's people; or, from their weakness, are not yet able to encounter the opposition which they expect to meet with. We are persuaded that there are many Nicodemuses and Nathanaels at present in the shade, who yet in due time will come forth to light, and be "burning and shining lights" in their day and generation. We mean not by these observations to express an approbation of worldly shame, or of the fear of man: for it is the duty of every Christian to "confess Christ" boldly, and to follow him without the camp bearing his reproach:" but so it is, that, from a variety of causes, some of the Lord's people remain unknown to us, and will be found at the last day, if not before, among the "hidden ones," that were known to God and accepted of him: and it is a comfort to think, that, as "there were seven thousand men in Israel who had not bowed their knee to Baal," whilst Elijah conceived himself to stand alone, so there may be at this day thousands in the world who, in the sight of God, are "faithful and beloved," though they have not at present any name or place in the Church of Christ. Yet, after all, in comparison of the careless and ungodly world, they will be found "a small remnant," "a little flock[b]."]

And for their distinguished privileges they are altogether indebted to the electing love of God—

[All by nature are alike "dead in trespasses and sins;" and if not quickened by Divine grace, must continue dead even to the end. Look into the Scriptures, and see if you can find so much as one who raised himself to newness of life. Did the converts on the day of Pentecost? Did Paul? Did Lydia? Did any make themselves to differ, or present to him what they had not previously received from him[c]? Can you find one that did not say with St. Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am?" Was there one to whom God did not "give to *will*, as well as to *do*, and *that* of his good pleasure?" To all without exception must it be said, as it was to the Apostles, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. God, in choosing men, has no respect to any thing but his own glory. He is not moved by any thing in them, either present or foreseen: "he loves them, because he will love them[d];" and in predestinating them unto the adoption of children by

[a] Matt. vii. 13, 14. [b] Luke xii. 32. [c] 1 Cor. iv. 7.
[d] Deut. vii. 6—8.

by Jesus Christ, he does it "*according to the good pleasure of his own will*," and "*to the praise of the glory of his own grace*[e]."]

We would not state these things in a crude and rash way. We know, they are deeply mysterious; and we are most anxious to,

II. Guard this doctrine against abuse—

Much is this doctrine hated: much too is it abused: but, however hated, or however abused, it is the truth of God, and therefore must be maintained. Let none however pervert it, or draw false conclusions from it, Let none say,

1. If this doctrine be true, *no blame attaches to me*—

[What! No blame attaches to those who live in sin; to those who live "without God in the world!" Has any one *compelled* you to act thus? Have you not been *free agents* in every thing that you have done? What if you were not able of *yourselves* to fulfil the will of God, did not God exhort you to come to him for grace and strength, and did he not promise to give grace sufficient for you? Has there not been much that you might have done, which yet you have neglected? and much that you might have abstained from, which yet you have committed? Will any one go into the presence of Almighty God and say, "I sought thee, but thou wouldst not hear: I endeavoured to the utmost of my power to comply with all thine injunctions; but thou withheldest from me the assistance that was necessary: I chose thee, but thou rejectedst me without a cause?" No: profane as many are, there is not a man to be found in the universe who will dare thus to insult his God. We all have a consciousness that sin at least is our own, whatever holiness may be: it is the fruit of our own choice, the work of our own hands: and every man who has not on the wedding-garment in the Last Day, will be dumb before his God, and not have one word to say in vindication of himself, when the Master of the feast shall order him to be tied hand and food, and cast into outer darkness[f].]

2. If this doctrine be true, *I may sit still, till God shall come and help me*—

[Where, we would ask, do the Scriptures countenance any such inference as this? They invariably enjoin the use of means, and promise a blessing to those who use them in a dependence upon God; "Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; for *every one* that asketh, receiveth &c." Will you after this sit down and

[e] Eph. i. 5, 6. [f] Matt. xxii. 11—13.

and say, "I will not ask?" Be it so; you are helpless in yourselves, and incapable of doing any thing that is truly good: but so was the man with the withered arm: yet, when our Lord said to him, Stretch out thine arm, did he reply, "Lord, I cannot?" No: he attempted to fulfil his Lord's command; and in the attempt was strengthened to perform it. So is it your duty to use the means to the best of your power, in obedience to God's command, and in dependence on his grace: and, if ye do so, you are assured that "you shall never seek his face in vain." You should do as much for yourselves, as if you had in yourselves an all-sufficiency for all things: but, whilst doing it, you should remember, that "your sufficiency is of God" alone. This is precisely what St. Paul has taught us. He addressed persons who were asleep, yea dead; yet did he bid them awake, and act; and promised, that in obeying his injunctions they should obtain from Christ all needful aid: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light[g]."]

3. If this doctrine be true, *I am in no danger, whatever I may do*—

[Does any one who professes to believe the doctrine of Election make this use of it? He needs nothing more to prove, that he at least is not of God's elect: for, if there be one mark of a reprobate more strong and decisive than another, it is that of "turning the grace of God into licentiousness." There is not a word in all the Book of God that gives any man a hope of salvation whilst he lives in sin. On the contrary, it is expressly declared, that, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." If we are "chosen of God before the foundation of the world," it is, "*that we may be holy*, and without blame before him in love[h]:" if "we are *chosen to salvation*, it is *through sanctification of the Spirit*, and belief of the truth[i]." God will never make his own Son "a Minister of sin." If he save us at all, it will be *from* our sins, and not *in* them. Hear how indignantly God rejects the idea of his leaving men at liberty to sin: "Behold, ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye commit all manner of sins, and come and stand before me in this House which is called by my name, and say, We are *delivered to do* all these abominations? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord of Hosts[k]." Yes; God does see it: and whoever maintains such a delusion as this, shall ere long find, to his cost, "whose word shall stand; God's, or his[l]."]

That no solid objection lies against this doctrine, will appear, whilst we,

III. Suggest

[g] Eph. v. 14. [h] ib. i. 4. [i] 2 Thess. ii. 13. [k] Jer. vii. 8—11.
[l] Jer. xliv. 28. with Gal. vi. 7, 8.

III. Suggest the proper improvement of it—

1. It should encourage all to seek for mercy at God's hands—

[If God's election were determined only by some good that was naturally inherent in man; and man's hope of the Divine favour were built on some superior excellence that was in him above others, who could venture to cherish any hope at all? Certainly there would be a fearful prospect for those who have long continued in their sins: for they would naturally say, How can God ever look with compassion on such a sinner as me? The old therefore, and the dying, would at once be driven to despair. But when we are told, that God "has mercy on whom he will have mercy," and dispenses his blessings freely to whomsoever he will, the vilest sinner in the universe may say, 'Then I will not despair: I know, I have nothing whereby to recommend myself to him: but He is at liberty to shew mercy to the very chief of sinners: and in that character will I apply to him, that he may glorify himself in me.' This is a just and Scriptural way of arguing: and it may be adopted by all who "know the plague of their own heart," even though they may have lived in sin, throughout their whole lives, and be now come to the borders of the eternal world: they may say, "His grace is his own; he may dispense it as he will; and, where sin has abounded, His grace may superabound. He chose Paul in order "that in him he might shew forth all long-suffering for a pattern" to the Church in all ages; and I will hope, that in me also he will shew, before the whole assembled universe, how far his grace can reach.' This is the true, legitimate, and only use which an unconverted sinnner should make of God's electing love.]

2. It should fill all who are the subjects of it with the deepest humility—

[Many ignorantly imagine, that the idea of God having elected us would fill us with pride: and if his election had respect to some goodness in us above others, and were founded on our superior merits, there were some ground for pride. But when God, in ordaining men to life, has respect only to his own sovereign will and pleasure, and to the manifestation of his own glory, no man has any ground to boast: nor will any man who is a partaker of this grace wish to boast. On the contrary, he will be disposed rather to say with the profoundest adoration, "What was I, Lord, that thou shouldest visit me?" This is the effect which the conferring of an undeserved favour has on every humble mind. Elizabeth, when the blessed Virgin, after her miraculous conception, came to visit her, exclaimed, "Whence is this to me, that the mother of

of my Lord should come unto me[m]?" How much more then will the saint be filled with wonder that *the Lord himself* should come, and take up his abode *within his very soul!* Again; when Mephibosheth was told by David that his Father's property should be restored to him, and that he should eat continually at the king's table, "he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am[n]?" How much more then will the Child of God abase himself as the most unworthy of mankind, when the King of kings, of his own sovereign love and mercy, tells him, that all the glory of heaven shall be his, and that he shall feast for ever at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb! This was the effect produced on Paul, who, because there was no word in the whole Greek language sufficiently strong whereby he might express his sense of his own unworthiness, made a word for himself, that places him beneath the least and lowest of all the saints of God: he calls himself, "less than the least of all saints." That is our proper appellation; and the more just sense we have of God's electing love, the more ready we shall all be to adopt it for our motto.]

3. It should stimulate them also to universal holiness—

[If we be "a *chosen generation*, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a *peculiar people*, it is that we may shew forth the praises of Him that hath called us out of darkness into marvellous light[o]." Yes; we are "created *unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." We are to be as "lights in a dark place;" as "a city set upon a hill:" we are to be "epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." Man expects this of us: and God also expects it of us. Man will naturally say, "What proof do these people give that they are the elect of God? If we look at them, what do we find in them more than others? These expectations are reasonable: and, if you are not more holy than others, they may reasonably say, that you are hypocrites and deceivers. I would call upon you then to shew by your fruits that you are trees of the Lord's planting. I call upon you to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" in the whole of your conversation. Hear the exhortation of an inspired Apostle: "Put on, *as the elect of God*, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye[p]." These

[m] Luke i. 43. [n] 2 Sam. ix. 7, 8. [o] 1 Pet. ii. 9.
[p] Col. iii. 12, 13.

These are the graces that ye are called to exercise, and these are the fruits whereby ye are to be known. By thus exhibiting to the world the mind that was in Christ, you will prove your title to the character of his saints as "called, and chosen, and faithful[q]."]

[q] Rev. xvii. 14.

DCCCCXXXVII.

GRACE AND WORKS OPPOSED TO EACH OTHER AS GROUNDS OF SALVATION.

Rom. xi. 6. *If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.*

IN reference to the doctrines of grace, St. Paul maintained a most watchful and "godly jealousy." On points of a less vital nature, he was ready to concede as far as possible; but on the point of *salvation by grace through faith* he was firm and immoveable. He would not give way for a moment, even though all the college of Apostles had opposed him[a], or an angel from heaven had professed to have received a commission to proclaim any thing that was inconsistent with it[b]. In the superstructure of our religion there might be errors, yea, considerable errors, as he tells us, and yet our souls be saved. Injurious indeed they would be, extremely injurious, to our welfare; but still they would not be utterly subversive of our hopes. But if the error affected the foundation of our religion, he declared it to be utterly incompatible with our final salvation[c].

This jealousy of his is peculiarly visible in the words which we have just read. They were not necessary to the Apostle's argument. In the preceding context he is shewing that God has among the Jews, as well as among the Gentiles, a chosen remnant: but having called them "a remnant according to the election of grace," he lays hold on the opportunity to confirm his favourite position, that *salvation is altogether of grace;* so entirely of grace, as absolutely to exclude

[a] Gal. ii. 5. [b] Gal. i. 8, 9. [c] 1 Cor. iii. 11—15.

exclude works altogether from having any share in meriting or procuring it.

The observation thus introduced deserves the deeper attention; because it shews how near to the Apostle's heart the truth was that is contained in it. Let us then, in considering this observation, attend to,

I. The truth of it—

The observation is simply this, That salvation must be altogether of grace, or altogether of works; for that the two cannot possibly coalesce; since each of them excludes the other as much as light and darkness. Now,

This observation is true—

[The Apostle has before drawn the distinction between "a reward of grace, and a reward of debt[d]." And it is clear, that if a thing be a gift, it cannot have been earned; and, on the other hand, if it have been earned, it cannot be a gift. It is true, the sum required may bear no proportion to the blessing bestowed: but still, however small the sum be, it is, as far as it goes, *a price paid* for the thing obtained: and whether that be more or less, it equally destroys the notion of a free gift. We readily concede, that all the works that Paul himself performed would be as nothing in comparison of eternal life: but yet, if it be only a thousandth part of his works that has been paid for eternal life, that life is *so far* earned by works, and ceases to be a gift of grace: and though we may admire the goodness of God in giving heaven for so small a consideration, the person to whom it is given will have to boast that he paid for it the consideration that had been demanded of him.]

It is true in reference to every part of our salvation—

[It is true in reference to our first election of God. If God chose us on account of some good works which he foresaw we should perform, those works must to all eternity be acknowledged as the true ground of our salvation; and our salvation must therefore be of works, and not of grace.

We are not now inquiring, whether any such works as would be proper to influence God's mind, can be performed by man, by man too in his fallen state, and unassisted by his God: (these are points which at the present we leave untouched:) we are only shewing now, that, supposing such works to be wrought,

[d] Rom. iv. 4.

wrought, and God's election to be determined by them, election would be of works, and not of grace.

In like manner, if our justification be on account of any work of ours, we may boast that it has been not a mere act of grace and mercy for Christ's sake, but a debt paid to us for something done by us. As to the comparative value of the work and the reward, we again say, that it is nothing to the purpose: it may serve to illustrate the goodness of God in annexing so great a reward to so small a work; but still the reward so conferred bears, and must ever bear, the character of a debt, and not of a gift.

To this it may be objected, that good works are represented in the Scripture as *objects of reward*, nay more, as forming *the measure* of that reward. This is true: but it does not in the least degree militate against the position before stated. Let us bear in mind what the Apostle's statement is: it is this; that if, in any part of our salvation from first to last, our works form the meritorious ground of our acceptance with God, our salvation is not of grace, but of works; and that consequently, if salvation be of grace, all works of ours must be excluded as forming the ground of our acceptance with him. But this is not contradicted by any thing which God may do after we are accepted of him. The whole case is then altered:

The works done, are done, not in our own strength, but by the operation of God's Spirit within us.

They are done, not in order to purchase heaven, but to manifest our love to God, and promote his glory.

They come up to God not as claiming any thing on account of their own intrinsic excellence, but as washed in the Redeemer's blood, and perfumed with the incense of his all-prevailing intercession.

They come not as demanding a recompence on the footing of justice, but as owing all their hope of acceptance to God's free and gracious promises.

They come not to set aside the grace of God, but to illustrate, adorn, and magnify it.

If any one of these works were to arrogate to itself the office claimed by the others, its value would be lost; and so baneful would be its influence, that it would destroy the value, and prevent the reward, of all the other works that the person had ever done.

Hence then it is evident, that though *God* may, for the *magnifying of his own grace*, bestow *gifts* upon his *children*, that can be no reason why *man*, whilst *an enemy to God*, should, *on the footing of justice*, for *the gratifying of his own pride*, *demand* of God a reward of *debt*. God is at liberty to give *what*, and *when*, and *to whom*, he will: and whatsoever, of his

his own free grace, he has promised, he most assuredly will perform: but this gives no right to man to *claim* what God *never has promised,* and what he *has in ten thousand places declared he never will give.*

We again therefore revert to our position, and say, that, if salvation be by grace, it cannot in any respect, or any degree, be of works: and, consequently, works must be for ever renounced as a ground of our acceptance with God, and we must look for every thing from grace, free grace, alone.]

The truth of the Apostle's observation being established, we proceed to shew,

II. The importance of it—

We have already called your attention to the way in which the observation is introduced, and which, we conceive, marks very strongly the importance of it in the Apostle's mind. And we may notice the same from the very pointed way in which the observation is made. The Apostle seems determined that nobody shall misunderstand him: and he has effectually secured his object in that particular.

To shew the importance of his observation then, we say, that,

1. It establishes beyond all doubt the freeness and fulness of the Gospel salvation—

[In many places, both in the Old and New Testament, does God guard his people against arrogating any thing to themselves. He warns the Jews by Moses, that they would be ready to indulge this propensity; but that his mercies to them had been in no respect the fruit of their own goodness, but wholly of his free and sovereign grace[e]? The only thing which they could behold on a retrospect, and which they ought to look back upon with never-ceasing shame, was, one continued scene of wickedness and provocations[f]. Thus St. Paul again and again reminds us, that it was "not by works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his own mercy that God had saved us[g]:" and still more plainly in another epistle, that "he had saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to *his own purpose and grace* which was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began*[h]." But the words of our text are so strong, that no one can attempt to get over them, without shewing, that he is

[e] Deut. ix. 4—6.
[f] ib. ver. 7. Compare Ezek. xxxvi. 31, 32.
[g] Tit. iii. 5.
[h] 2 Tim. i. 9.

is manifestly "wresting" them from their proper, and obvious, and only meaning. Be it known then, that salvation is, and ever must be, of grace, from first to last. Our election from eternity, our justification in time, and our glorification when time shall be no more, are all the fruits of God's free and sovereign grace: the foundation was laid in grace; the superstructure is raised by grace; and "when the head-stone shall be brought forth, we must still cry, Grace, grace, unto it[i]." There is not a soul in heaven that must not to all eternity say, "By the grace of God I am what I am."]

2. It secures against all invasion the honour of God—

[Men are ever attempting to rob God of his glory: they cannot endure that *all* the honour of their salvation should be given to God alone. When they see the crown placed on the Redeemer's head, they feel as if they themselves were injured and dishonoured. They think that some part of the glory belongs to them; that their works must be considered, in part at least, as forming the ground of their justification; and that God's election of them was determined by his foresight of their superior goodness. But, when they come to these words, and see what an insuperable obstacle they oppose to all such vain conceits, they find that there is no alternative left them, but to earn salvation by a perfect obedience to the law, or to accept it as the free gift of God in Christ Jesus. They see, that, to blend the two is *impossible*: and that, if they do not accept salvation wholly by grace, they are forced altogether upon the covenant of works, and are cut off from all hope in Christ Jesus[k]. This alternative they dare not for a moment to adopt; and therefore they are constrained to give to God the glory due unto his name, and to acknowledge Christ both as "the Author, and the Finisher, of their faith[l]." In a word, they are made willing to "glory in Christ alone."]

3. It makes clear the path of the true penitent—

[Persons in the earlier stages of repentance are apt to be much perplexed. They think, they ought to have something of their own to unite with Christ's merits, or at least something to recommend them to his favour. But this they cannot find: and the more they discover of the evil of their own ways, the farther they appear to be from possessing any of those qualifications which they desire. This greatly alarms them; and makes them fear, it would be presumptuous in such unworthy creatures as they to hope in Christ. But when they see the force of the Apostle's observation, they are convinced, that hitherto they have proceeded on wrong grounds, and

[i] Zech. iv. 6, 7, 9. [k] Gal. v. 2—4. [l] Heb. xii. 2.

and that the only true way of going to Christ, is, to go with all their sins upon them, and receive salvation from him as the purchase of his blood, and the gift of his grace. This, when once seen, dissipates all the clouds and darkness that have obscured their way, and makes their path to life as clear as the sun at noon-day. They see themselves in the predicament of the wounded Israelites, when directed to look to the Brazen Serpent; or of the jailor, when bidden to believe in Christ. They believe; they look; they live.]

On the observation thus explained we ground a few words of ADVICE—

1. Accept with gratitude this free salvation—

[Do not suffer the pride of your hearts to rise against it. Do not grudge unto God the honour of saving you by his own grace. Were you sinking in the midst of the ocean, would you refuse deliverance, unless you were left to earn it, or some of the honour of your preservation were to be assigned to you? Be not then such enemies to yourselves as to reject a free salvation from death and hell. You know full well, that you did nothing to induce God to send his only Son into the world: you know also, that you contributed nothing to Christ, to give perfection to his obedience, or virtue to his sacrifice. You must know too, if you are not blinded even to infatuation, that you can do nothing which does not need mercy on account of its own imperfections. Be prevailed upon then to accept with thankfulness a free and full salvation: you can add nothing to what Christ has done and suffered for you: and the consequence of attempting to add any thing will be inevitable and eternal ruin. Let Christ have all the honour of his own work, and you shall have all the benefit.]

2. Give no occasion for the objections that are raised against it—

[Those who are averse to the doctrines of grace, always represent the favourers of those doctrines as embracing them in order the more quietly to live in sin: and if they can find a person who turns the grace of God into licentiousness, they will not be contented with blaming him, but will cast the blame on the Gospel itself, and represent such conduct as the natural result of such principles: and one such instance of hypocrisy will be made a subject of great notoriety, when a thousand instances of blameless and exemplary piety will be overlooked. Be careful then, Brethren, to give no occasion for such observations. Be careful not to cast a stumbling-block before the ungodly world; for, if there be a "woe to the world because of offences," there will be a ten-fold heavier

"woe

"woe unto him by whom the offence cometh." Be watchful against the incursions of sin, and the temptations of Satan; "that he who is on the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."]

3. Recommend and adorn it by a holy conversation—

[Shew by your lives what the proper tendency and effect of grace is. We are told that "the grace of God which bringeth salvation, teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, and soberly, and godly in this present world." Shew then, by all your dealings with men, what true righteousness is: shew, by your perfect self-government in all your tempers, dispositions, and habits, what true sobriety is: and shew, by the spirituality of your minds and the heavenliness of your lives, wherein true godliness consists. This will recommend the Gospel more effectually than all the encomiums that can be lavished upon it, and will operate more strongly to convince men of its excellence than all the arguments that can be urged. Let it be seen then, that whilst you magnify and extol the grace of God, you are the truest friends of good works; for that, though you exclude them from your foundation, you display them in your superstructure, and, in fact, raise them higher, and of a nobler quality, than any other people in the universe.]

DCCCCXXXVIII.

THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS A BLESSING TO THE GENTILES.

Rom. xi. 11, 12. *I say then, Have the Jews stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?*

"THE ways of God are in the great deep, and his footsteps are not known:" they are utterly inscrutable to us: "as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts." We cannot see the end of any one of his dispensations. Who could ever have conceived the designs of God in suffering Joseph to be sold into Egypt? Yet did God intend by

by that dispensation to keep the whole Egyptian nation from perishing by famine, yea, and the very persons who sold him thither. No less mysterious are his dealings with the Jews: they are cast off: they are led captive of all nations: yet are they suffering for the good of all the people amongst whom they dwell; and even for their own ultimate advantage also. This is strongly asserted in the passage before us, where their fall is said to be "the riches of the Gentiles," as their recovery also will be in a far more signal manner and degree.

We presume not to think that we can ever fathom this deep mystery: yet will it be profitable for us to consider it as far as it is revealed: and therefore we shall endeavour, according to the light given us, to shew you, *What an interest the Gentiles have in God's dealings with the Jews;* particularly in,

I. Their present dispersion—

This was designed of God for the salvation of the Gentiles—

[Doubtless the Jews richly merited this judgment: and therefore, whatever good may be designed for others, no injury is done to them. And God too, if he had pleased, might have vouchsafed mercy to the Gentiles, without rejecting the Jews: his heart was large enough to embrace both, and his power to save them both. But he, in his own infinite wisdom, ordained otherwise. It is not for us to inquire, Why he acted thus? It is sufficient for us that he has seen fit to do so: and "he giveth not account to us of any of his matters." This advantage from it at least we see, that he has by this means exhibited, in a contrasted view, "his severity to them, and his goodness to us[a];" and consequently, has illustrated and glorified at the same time his apparently opposite perfections of justice and mercy. But, however this may be, so he has ordained, and so he has done: and it is an undoubted fact, that,]

The fall of the Jews has led to the salvation of the Gentiles—

[The very circumstance of the Gospel being rejected by the Jews, was favourable to the reception of it among the Gentiles; inasmuch as it demonstrated, that there was no confederacy among the Jews to deceive them; that the Apostles, who

[a] ver. 22.

who brought the tidings of salvation to them at the peril of their lives, were men of strict integrity; and that the Scriptures which the Jews so unwittingly fulfilled, must be true. And the conduct of the Jews in relation to the Gospel did actually produce this effect. Their enmity against it at the very first promulgation of it caused them to persecute the Church with the utmost vehemence: that persecution drove multitudes of Christians (almost all except the Apostles) from Jerusalem, and scattered them through all Judea and Samaria: and the people, so scattered, "went everywhere preaching the word:" so that, instead of suppressing the Gospel, as they hoped, the Jews were instrumental to the sending forth of thousands, all at once, to preach it[b]. Again, when Paul and Barnabas had preached to the Jews, as they had hitherto invariably done in the first place, at Antioch, the inveterate malignity of the Jews determined them henceforth to preach to the Gentiles, agreeably to the command which had been given them in the Scriptures: and the consequence of this was, that multitudes of the Gentiles immediately embraced the Gospel, and "glorified the word of the Lord[c]." Thus, "the fall of the Jews became the riches of the Gentiles," inasmuch as it was the occasion of the tidings of "reconciliation being published to the Gentile world," and "the unsearchable riches of Christ" being scattered in rich profusion over the face of the whole earth.]

The present rejection of the Jews is ultimately designed also even for the good of that benighted people—

[God designed that the transfer of his blessings to the Gentiles should "provoke to jealousy" his own forsaken people: and St. Paul, in preaching to the Gentiles, had that very object in view, namely, "to provoke to emulation those who were of his own flesh, and thereby to save some of them." Whilst possessing exclusively all the tokens of God's favour, they were regardless of it: but when they saw that the gifts of miracles and of prophecy were transferred from them to the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles were made happy in the enjoyment of their God, they were led to inquire more candidly into the truths delivered by the Apostles, and thus were in very many instances converted to the faith. Nor can we doubt but that the same effect would yet more frequently flow from that cause, if the lives of Christians continued to be such as they were in the Apostolic age.]

But still richer benefits will flow to the world from,

II. Their

[b] Acts viii. 1, 4. [c] Acts xiii. 46—48.

II. Their future restoration—

That the Jews will in due time be converted to Christianity, is certain—

[When St. Paul asked, Whether their fall was final and irrecoverable, he shuddered at the idea, and declared, that God had certainly no such purpose respecting them: that, on the contrary, he had entered into covenant with them to restore them in due season, and to confer on them, as well as on the Gentiles, all the blessings of Redemption. The period he had fixed in his Divine counsels was, "When the fulness of the Gentiles should come in;" that is, when there should be among the Gentiles such a measure of concern about the Gospel, as should shew that the time for their fuller and more general reception of it was arrived[d]. (It is the *commencement*, and *not the close*, of this period, that must be understood by "the fulness of the Gentiles being come[e].") Then shall "the fulness of the Jews" also be brought in. Multitudes in every place shall then *begin* to be converted to the faith; and with greater or less rapidity will the whole nation be turned to the Lord. "The first-fruits were holy; and so is the lump: the root was holy; and so are the branches." Hence their restoration is assured to them; for "God's gifts and calling are without repentance[f]."]

The effect of this upon the Gentiles will be blessed in the extreme—

[The Jews being dispersed over the whole world, the change wrought on them will attract universal attention: and carry such conviction with it to the minds of the beholders, as nothing can withstand. Besides, the Jews, feeling the truth and importance of the Gospel themselves, will, as in the Apostolic age, become preachers of it themselves; and their Gentile neighbours, knowing what enemies to Christianity they lately were, and seeing the wonderful revolution that has taken place in their minds, will be led to inquire into the Gospel themselves, and will be constrained to yield to its influence. So rapid will their conversion be, that they will "flock to Christ even as doves to their windows," and "a nation will be born in a day."

We have before shewn the beneficial effects which have resulted

[d] ver. 25—27. compared with Isai. lix. 20, 21.

[e] πλήρωμα corresponds with ἥττημα. As soon as the fall of the Jews *commenced*, the benefit began to arise to the Gentiles; and as soon as the time for the more general conversion of the Gentiles shall *commence*, the time for the conversion of the Jews will commence also.

[f] ver. 16, 29.

resulted to the Gentiles from the *fall* of the Jews: and if such inestimable benefits have been conferred on the world by their fall, "how much more" shall the same, and greater, benefits arise from "*their fulness?*" Mark the force of the argument here—The Jews, when the Gospel was preached to them, rejected, blasphemed, and opposed it with all their might: but when they themselves shall be converted by it, they will embrace it most cordially, they will cry mightily to God for the success of it, and they will labour to the uttermost to diffuse the knowledge of it through the world. If then their rejection of it was so productive of benefit to the Gentile world, how much more shall their *acceptance* of it be! if their *blasphemies* against it, how much more their *prayers* for its diffusion! if their most envenomed *opposition* to it, how much more their zealous *co-operation* in extending the knowledge of it! We have seen the former; and we may with certainty infer the latter.]

From this subject the following REFLECTIONS naturally arise:

1. What compassion should we feel for the Jewish nation!

[Once were they the most highly-favoured people upon earth: the privileges which were exclusively conferred on them, almost exceed belief——— But how degraded are they now! they are "a hissing, and a reproach, to the whole earth[g]." Yet behold, such are they become for us! Incredible as it may seem, "they were broken off, that we might be engrafted on their stem[h]:" they were disinherited, that we might possess their property[i]. Can we consider this, and feel no compassion for them? Can we pass them by, as the Priest and Levite did, and shew them no mercy; especially when God has told us, that the very end for which he has had mercy upon us, is, that we may be the means of extending that mercy unto them[k]? Even in reference to the wants of the body, God has said, "If a man see his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" How much more then is this true respecting the wants of the soul! Beloved Brethren, judge yourselves in reference to this matter; and try your love to God by the measure of your compassion to his benighted people: and never think that your own souls are right before God, till you have learned to pity, and pray for, and to seek the salvation of, "the lost sheep of the House of Israel."]

2. How

[g] Jer. xxix. 18. [h] ver. 19. [i] ver. 28, 31. [k] ib.

2. How should we fear and tremble for ourselves!

[Highly favoured as the Jews once were, they are now outcasts from God, and monuments of his just vengeance: and, if we abuse our privileges, a similar fate awaits us also. "If God spared not the natural branches," says the Apostle, "take heed lest he also spare not thee[l]." It was "for their unbelief that they were broken off: and it is by faith that we stand. Oh then, be not high-minded, but fear[m]." Fear "lest there be in you also an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." Do not imagine that a mere outward profession of Christianity is of any value: no, it is "a seeing of Him who is invisible:" a "walking by faith, and not by sight:" it is the exercise of that "faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" in a word, it is "a life of faith upon the Son of God, who has loved you, and given himself for you:" *This*, Beloved, is the life to which you are called by the Gospel: and it is by such a life that you are to "provoke the Jews to emulation:" and, if you live not in this way, or, having begun to live thus, turn away from it, it would be better for you never to have heard the Gospel; yea, it were better that you had been born Jews, or Heathens, and infinitely "better that you had never been born" at all.]

3. How earnestly should we labour for the conversion of the Jews!

[God has decreed that they shall be converted: and we have reason to believe that the period fixed for it in the Divine counsels is not far distant. It is a fact, that multitudes in the heathen world are expecting a change in their religion: the Mahometans and Hindoos throughout our Eastern Empire are strongly impressed with this idea: and the exertions making in every possible way for the conversion of the heathen world, warrant us to hope, that "their fulness" will speedily commence. At all events, "we are debtors to the Jews," and should seek to discharge our debt[n]. Though they are at this time "enemies for our sakes, they are still beloved for their fathers' sakes[o]:" and if, notwithstanding their present enmity against Christ, they are beloved of *God* for their fathers' sakes, should they not be beloved of *us*? Think how indebted we are to their fathers, to those who, at the peril of their lives, brought the glad tidings of salvation home to *us*: and should we not labour to recompense all this in acts of love to their descendants? It is a favourite notion with many, that to attempt the conversion of the Jews is a hopeless task. But what ground is there for such

[l] ver. 21. [m] ver. 20. [n] Rom. xv. 27. [o] ver. 28.

such a desponding thought as this? Are *they* farther off from God than the Gentiles were, when the Gospel was first published to them? or is it a harder thing for God to convert *them* than to convert *us?* God expressly tells us, that it is a work of *less* difficulty: "If thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and were graffed, contrary to nature, into a good olive-tree, HOW MUCH MORE shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree[p]?" Despair not then of doing them good; but exert yourselves in every possible way for their conversion to the faith of Christ. You are told, that "if they abide not in unbelief, they shall be graffed in again: for God is able to graff them in again[q]." Seek then to convince them of the truth of Christianity, and to bring them to the knowledge and love of their Messiah. If you desire only the conversion of the *Gentile* world, you should begin with the *Jews*; because it is the fulness of the *Jews* that is to operate on the *Gentiles*, and to effect, as it were, among *them*, "a resurrection from the dead[r]." But it is for God's sake, whose people they are; and for Christ's sake, who bought them with his blood; and for your own sake, who must give an account of the talents entrusted to your care, that I call upon you to be workers together with God in this great cause: and, if you have any sense of God's "goodness to you," seek to avert and terminate "his severity to them[s]."]

[p] ver. 24. [q] ver. 23. [r] ver. 15.
[s] ver. 22. with 2 Cor. ii. 16.

DCCCCXXXIX.

THE UNSEARCHABLENESS OF GOD'S WAYS.

Rom. xi. 33. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

ON whatever side we look, we are surrounded with mysteries; yea, we are a mystery to ourselves. The works of creation, and providence, and redemption, are all mysterious; and the more we know of them, the more we shall be disposed to exclaim, "O the depths!" Perhaps no one of the Children of men ever had so deep an insight into the great mysteries of the Gospel as the apostle Paul: yet, when he had unravelled them in a way that no other man ever did, he was constrained to acknowledge, that there

were in the Gospel, treasures unexplored, and mines unsearchable, and riches of wisdom that far surpassed the conceptions of any finite intelligence. This is a truth which we ought to be well acquainted with: for, till we are made sensible of it, we shall never regard the Gospel with that reverence and admiration which ought ever to exist in our minds towards it. Let us then contemplate the unsearchableness of God's "judgments," that is, of the means he has appointed for our salvation, and the incomprehensibility of his "ways," by which he dispenses that salvation to fallen man.

He is altogether incomprehensible,

I. In the way he has provided for the salvation of men—

Consider,

1. His sending his only dear Son to be the Surety and Substitute of fallen man—

[From having been early instructed in that great mystery, the incarnation of the Son of God, we hear of it without emotion: but when we contemplate, that the Creator of heaven and earth became a creature, in the likeness of sinful flesh; that in order to his being formed immaculate, he was born of a pure Virgin through the operation of the Holy Ghost; and that, being so born, he did actually become a curse for us, and "bear our iniquities in his own body on the tree;" we are lost in wonder. We are not only at a loss to comprehend it, but seem as if we could not believe it; so strange, so almost impossible, does it appear: and if it were not confirmed in such a way that it is impossible to withhold our belief, we should be ready to account it blasphemy to assert such a fact, and madness to believe it. But the fact is so: and as, at the first revelation of it, it filled all heaven with wonder, so will it do to all eternity: "the height and depth and length and breadth of the love" displayed in it, will never be explored.]

2. His saving men by a righteousness not their own—

[This seems no less unsearchable than the former. Supposing that God had sent his Son to expiate our guilt, we should at least expect that he would require man to work out a righteousness for himself, and to obtain salvation by his obedience to the law. But, blessed be his name! he has not

not required any such thing. He requires men indeed to be righteous, and to obey his law: nor will he save any man who does not in these respects endeavour to fulfil his will. But he does not require man to fulfil his law, in order to work out a righteousness whereby he may be justified: on the contrary, he requires men to renounce all dependence on their own righteousness, and to seek for acceptance solely through the righteousness of Christ. A perfect righteousness of our own we could not have: and therefore God sent his own Son to obey the precepts of the law, as well as to suffer its penalties, and by his own obedience unto death to "bring in an everlasting righteousness," "which should be unto all, and upon all, them that believe." Thus the vilest sinner in the universe, the very instant he truly believes in Christ, becomes possessed of a righteousness commensurate with the utmost demands of God's perfect law, a righteousness, in which he stands before God without spot or blemish. How wonderful is this! how inconceivable to any finite capacity, that God *should*, I had almost said that God *could*, appoint *such* a way for the restoration and salvation of fallen man!]

3. His bringing out of man's fall more glory to himself, and more good to man, than if man had never fallen—

[The dishonour done to God by the fall of man was beyond all conception great: yet is the honour done to him by man's recovery infinitely greater. True it is, God would *have* been equally glorious in himself, if man had never been *restored*: but his perfections would never have been so displayed in the sight of his creatures. It would never have been known that mercy constituted any part of his character; whilst it is, in reality, that perfection in which he most delights. Nor would his justice have appeared so awful in the destruction of the whole human race, as it appears in inflicting death upon his only dear Son, when standing in the place of sinners. But suppose that *mercy* might have been exercised towards sinners in some other way; how could *justice* have borne any part in their salvation? But now justice is as much engaged on the side of a believing penitent as mercy itself; and the penitent, whilst he intreats God to be *merciful* to *himself*, may intreat him also to be *just* to *his Beloved Son*, who paid the full price for his redemption: yes, he may hope in the very *justice* of God, who is "a just God and a Saviour," and can be "just, and yet the justifier of all them that believe." What an inscrutable mystery is here!

But we must notice also the good that accrues to man. Suppose man had never fallen, he would have had but a creature's righteousness, and consequently a reward only proportioned

portioned to it: but now the Believer has the righteousness of the Creator himself, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "made righteousness unto us," and is therefore "called, The Lord our Righteousness." I may add too, that the Believer is actually more safe, than Adam was in Paradise. Adam had his own safety, and that of all his posterity, committed to his hands: and what the event was, we know by bitter experience. But God has now committed his chosen people into the hands of his own Son, that HE may redeem them by his blood, sanctify them by his Spirit, and "preserve them blameless unto his heavenly kingdom." Now Jesus himself tells us, that "of those who were given him, he lost none," nor ever would lose one; for that "none ever could, or ever should, pluck them out of his hands." The Father has no longer trusted us, so to speak, with our own destinies: he has treasured up our life and strength in Christ Jesus: "our life is hid with Christ in God:" and because Christ himself is our life, we, at his appearing, shall appear with him in glory,"

Say, now, Brethren, whether "these judgments be not indeed unsearchable, and these ways past finding out?"———]

Glorious as that part of our subject is, we leave it, in order to mark the mysteriousness of God's dealings with men,

II. In the way in which he imparts that salvation to them—

And here we would notice his conduct,

1. Towards the world at large—

[This is the point to which St. Paul in our text more especially refers: he has throughout the whole chapter expatiated upon the rejection of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, and the final restoration of the Jews themselves: and from the view of those mysterious dispensations he is led to make the exclamation before us. Consider then these points. Consider his first separating to himself a people in the person of Abraham, who was an idolater, like all the rest of the world. Yet he took not all of his seed; but only the seed of Isaac, excluding Ishmael from all participation of the promised blessings. Yet neither did he take all of Isaac's seed; but rejected Esau, the elder, and took Jacob, the younger; and *that* too by a special order, "whilst they were yet in their mother's womb, and consequently could have done neither good nor evil." Is there nothing wonderful in this? Who could have conceived that God should vouchsafe such mercy to any; or that, vouchsafing it, he should dispense it in so sovereign

sovereign a way? Yet so he did; and the fact is undeniable. In due time he multiplied the posterity of Jacob, and brought them out of Egypt, and led them through the wilderness, and put them into possession of the Promised Land, and communicated to that family *exclusively* the means of salvation for the space of two thousand years. Here we might ask, If God was not merciful, Why did he choose any? and if he was merciful, why for so long a period did he exclude any? But "God's ways are in the great deep." "He giveth not account to us of any of his matters."

At last, for their iniquities he cast off his chosen people; and made the rejection of them *the occasion* and *the means* of calling in the Gentiles. Who shall explain this mystery? Who shall tell us the reasons why God acted thus? Who shall tell us why the Gentiles were not called before; or why they were called then; and especially why God made the fall of the Jews to be the riches of the Gentiles, and the salvation of the world? Will any one undertake to account for these things?

But the deepest part of this mystery yet remains to be noticed. God has still purposes of love towards his rejected people, though he has cast them off almost 1800 years; and intends to make the more general awakening of the Gentiles the means of bringing back again to him the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and of engrafting them again upon their own stock, from which they have been so long broken off, and on which the Gentiles have been so long grafted in their stead: and then he will make that very restoration of the Jews the means of converting the whole world; so that it shall be as if there were a general resurrection of all the Saints to live again upon the earth, all mankind being united under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and all constituting one fold under one Shepherd. What shall we say to these things? Was there not reason for Paul, in the prospect of them, to exclaim, "O the depths!"? Truly "God's judgments are a great deep[a]:" "He doeth great things and unsearchable, and marvellous things without number[b]."]

2. Towards individual Believers—

[In reference to these also we must say, that "God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts; but as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts." Observe *the objects of his choice*: Who are they? Are they such as human reason would select? He takes a Manasseh, who had filled Jerusalem with the blood of innocents; a Mary Magdalen, who had been possessed by seven devils; a Saul,

[a] Ps. xxxvi. 6. [b] Job v. 9.

a Saul, that was a proud, blaspheming, cruel, blood-thirsty persecutor; and he leaves the young man, who, in his own opinion at least, had kept all God's commandments from his youth up: yes, publicans and harlots were admitted into his kingdom freely and in vast multitudes, whilst the Scribes and Pharisees were given over to final obduracy. What shall we say to this? The fact is unquestionable; and we can only say, as our Lord did in the contemplation of this great mystery, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Mark farther, *the manner in which he calls them to himself.* Some he calls with terror, as the jailor; and others with the gentle drawings of his love, as Nathanael: some by the instrumentality of his Ministers; and others by the secret operations of his Spirit, without the intervention of any outward means: some suddenly, as Matthew; others gradually, as Apollos: some in early life, at the third or fourth hour; and others on a dying bed, at the eleventh hour.

His mode of completing in them the good work must also be noticed. Some he leads through deep waters, as David; whilst others have comparatively a smooth and easy passage: some, like Peter, are suffered to fall into grievous sins; whilst others, like Paul, persevere in an unblemished course even to the end.

In all these things the sovereignty of God is most conspicuously displayed: and St. Paul has a peculiar reference to that in the exclamation before us. He asks, "Who hath first given to the Lord?" Who has laid him under any obligation to confer his blessings upon him? If any such person can be found, let him come and prefer his claim; and I pledge myself, says he, that "it shall be recompensed unto him again." And then he goes on to declare, that God, as a mighty Sovereign, does every thing purely of his own will, and for his own glory: for that "of him, (as the Author,) and through him, (as the Disposer,) and to him, (as the End,) are all things: and that to him must all the glory be given for ever and ever[c]."

Such are God's judgments, and such his ways: but "how little a portion of him is known[d]!" This however we must say, that though "clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne."]

SEE then from hence,

1. What is the proper posture of a sinner's mind—

[We should not presume to sit in judgment upon God, arraigning either the declarations of his word, or the dispensations of his providence. What know we either of the one or of the other? "We were but of yesterday, and know nothing:"

[c] ver. 35, 36. [d] Job xxvi. 14.

nothing:" and "if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know[e]." We are not to imagine, that, because there are many things in God's word above our ability to comprehend, they are therefore not true; or that, because in his providence there are many things which we cannot account for, they are therefore not good. We should remember, that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God; and that "though vain man would be wise, he is born like a wild ass's colt[f]." Let a sense of our extreme ignorance then lead us to a meek submission to our God; and let us, whenever difficulties occur, satisfy ourselves with this reflection, that "what we know not now, we shall know hereafter."]

2. What is the truest felicity, both of saints and angels—

[To search into the great mystery of godliness is right, provided we do it with humility and godly fear. And, if we look to God to teach us, "he will by his Spirit shew us, what no unassisted eye ever saw, or ear heard, or heart conceived." Yes, He will teach us "the deep things of God:" he will exhibit to our view "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and give us an insight into that mystery of a crucified Saviour, "in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." What do we suppose were the feelings of the Apostle, when, from a view of the unsearchableness of God's judgments, he cried out "O the depths!" Can we conceive a sublimer joy than he at that time experienced? The angels are constantly employed just as he was at that time. We are expressly told, that they are "always desiring to look into" the great mysteries of Redemption; and, no doubt, from every discovery they make, their joy is exceedingly enhanced. We cannot doubt but that the felicity of the saints in glory will very principally consist in this, in admiring and adoring those dispensations of grace and mercy, which here they so superficially beheld, but which then will be more fully unfolded to their view. Let this then, Brethren, be your employment now: it will be a heaven upon earth: and the more enlarged are your discoveries of your Redeemer's glory here, the more will you be prepared and fitted for the enjoyment of it in a better world.]

[e] 1 Cor. viii. 2. [f] Job xi. 14.

DCCCCXL.

DEVOTEDNESS TO GOD RECOMMENDED.

Rom. xii. 1. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

THE end of all true religion is, to bring men to God. From him they have fallen, and to him must they be restored. Whatever instructions have not this object in view, are of small value. The Gospel itself would be an empty speculation, if it did not teach us to hope for some practical effects. There are some who would separate principle from practice: but not so the apostle Paul: he expected not fruit indeed without a root; nor hoped to raise an edifice, without laying a foundation: but, when his foundation was firmly laid, he deferred not to build upon it. In all the preceding part of this epistle he has shewn how sinners are to find acceptance with God; and has proved the sovereignty of God in the disposal of his blessings. But, having finished his argument, he does not leave us there; he goes on to shew the practical effects of his principles; and urges us, from the consideration of all God's mercies, to devote ourselves unreservedly to his service.

That we may enter fully into the exhortation before us, we shall consider,

1. The duty to which we are exhorted—

There is in the words before us an evident allusion to the sacrifices that were offered under the law. The victims were brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and were there slain; and their bodies were disposed of according to the particular directions given in the law, as suited to the occasions on which the offerings were made; some being wholly burnt upon the altar, and others partly burnt, and partly eaten by those who ministered before the Lord. In reference to these; we are required to "present our bodies (which is here put for our whole selves) a living sacrifice unto the Lord;"

Lord;" that is, we should, with the full concurrence of our inmost souls, devote ourselves to God,

1. To fulfil his will—

[We must not strain a metaphor too far. The sacrifices under the law were intended to make atonement for sin: but this is no part of our office; Christ, our great Sacrifice, having, by his own body once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. It is only as far as the victim was surrendered entirely to God, that the metaphor is applicable to us: and in this view it is frequently used; the whole body of Believers being themselves an offering to the Lord[a], and "a spiritual priesthood also, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ[aa]."

Hear then to what an extent we are to be given up to God: May "the very God of peace," says the Apostle, "sanctify you wholly: and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ[b]." No part of us should be under the dominion of any other lord: but "as we have formerly yielded both the members of our bodies and the faculties of our souls, as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, we must henceforth yield them wholly unto God, as those that are alive unto God[c]." Every sin, of whatever kind, must be mortified; and every grace, however difficult and self-denying, be brought into habitual exercise ———]

2. To be disposed of for his glory—

[If God call for our whole persons, as it were, to be consumed by fire upon his altar, we must not draw back; but must say with the Apostle, "I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die, for the Lord's sake." So far from regarding such an event with dread, we should rather consider it as our highest honour. Thus it was that Paul viewed it: "If," says he, "I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all: do ye also joy and rejoice with me[d]:" for, so far am I from regarding such an event as a matter of condolence, that I look upon it as a fit subject for mutual congratulations. I mean not that such an end is to be sought for by us; but it is cheerfully to be submitted to, if God in his providence should call us to it. We should regard sufferings for Christ's sake with a holy indifference, "desiring only that Christ should be magnified in our bodies, whether by life or death[e]." Of course, all minor sacrifices of property, or reputation, or liberty, are to be welcomed by us, and glorified in, as means of honouring and glorifying our incarnate God.

[a] Rom. xv. 16. [aa] 1 Pet. ii. 5. [b] 1 Thess. v. 23.
[c] Rom. vi. 12, 13, 19. [d] Phil. ii. 17, 18. [e] Phil. i. 20.

God[f]. In a word, "we should neither live to ourselves, nor die unto ourselves; but live and die unto God only; so that, both living and dying, we may be the Lord's[g]."]

But let us mark more particularly the beauty and emphasis of,

II. The exhortation itself—

St. Paul presses upon us the performance of this duty,

1. From the obligations we owe to God—

[In all the preceding part of this epistle, St. Paul has been unfolding the great mystery of Redemption as wrought out for us by the Lord Jesus Christ, and as applied to us by the Spirit, according to the eternal counsels of the Father. By the consideration of these "mercies" he urges us to give up ourselves to God. It was for this very end that these mercies were vouchsafed to us. Wherefore did our blessed Saviour "give himself for us?" Was it not "to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works?" And to what did the Father "predestinate us, but to be conformed to the image of his Son?" Let these ends then be answered in us: and let us remember, that, "having been bought with a price, we are not our own; but are bound to glorify God with our bodies and our spirits, which are his[h]."]

2. From the nature of the service itself—

[It is *good in itself*.—"God calls us not unto uncleanness, but to holiness." He says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." The sacrifices under the law were to be without spot or blemish: and such also are we to be: "We should present ourselves a living sacrifice, *holy*." True it is, that till we are renewed by the Holy Spirit we cannot be holy: but it is equally true, that, when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ aright, he will give us his Holy Spirit, by whom we shall be "created after God in righteousness and true holiness," and "be changed into Christ's image, from glory to glory."

It is also "*acceptable to God*."—Nothing in the universe is so pleasing to him as a broken and contrite heart. As for all the legal sacrifices, he had no delight in them, any farther than they typified the Lord Jesus, and were offered with a reference to him. They were even odious to him, when presented by ungodly worshippers, who relied on them for acceptance, whilst they lived in wilful sin[i]. A heart filled with gratitude to him, and devoted to his service, was "more than

[f] 1 Pet. iv. 12—14.
[g] Rom. xiv. 7, 8.
[h] 1 Cor. vi. 20.
[i] Isai. i. 11—14.

than thousands of rams or ten thousands of rivers of oil[k]: and every act of obedience proceeding from faith and love, is in his sight the most acceptable tribute that can possibly be offered[l].

It is also *most worthy of a rational Being*.—Any service short of an entire surrender of the soul to God is irrational and absurd. How can it possibly be, that the heart-searching God should approve of formal and hypocritical services! If he had no delight in the blood of bulls and of goats, how can we suppose that he should have pleasure in lying words, and hypocritical professions! But in the surrender of the soul to him, there is something that commends itself to the judgment of every considerate mind. True, we cannot add to his glory or happiness by any thing that we can do: but still we may employ for him the bodies he has created, and the souls he has redeemed: and in so doing, we render him the best service of which our nature is capable; and shall assuredly receive from him at last that token of his approbation, "Well done, good and faithful servant."]

APPLICATION—

[Let me now, Brethren, after the Apostle's example, address you in *the language of intreaty*. We might, as standing in the place of Almighty God, command you: but for love sake we rather "beseech you." O consider what mercies you have received at God's hand, and are yet hoping to receive, through the sacrifice of his only dear Son———— Think too how reasonable is the service to which we call you; how profitable to you, and how pleasing to God———— We intreat you not to withhold it: we intreat you not to defer it another hour. If indeed you can prove it unreasonable, or unprofitable, or unacceptable to God, we are content that you shall reject it as folly, and decry it as enthusiasm: but if you cannot find one substantial objection against it, or one reasonable excuse for declining it, then, we beseech you, act as becomes persons already on the brink and precipice of eternity, and speedily to stand at the judgment-seat of Christ. Give yourselves up to Him who bought you with his blood: give yourselves to him, to be saved in his appointed way, and to glorify him in every situation which you may be called to fill. If he calls you to act for him, "whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with all your might:" and if to suffer for him, "rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer for his sake." Thus shall the end of all God's mercies to you be duly answered, and his glory be advanced in your everlasting salvation.]

[k] Mic. vi. 6—8. [l] Ps. l. 9—14. Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

DCCCCXLI.

CHRISTIANS ARE ALL MEMBERS OF ONE BODY.

Rom. xii. 4—8. *As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

TO have the mind well instructed in religious principles, is good: but we must never forget that the end of principle is practice; and that all the knowledge, whether of men or angels, will be of no service, if it do not operate to the renovation of our souls after the Divine image. Hence St. Paul, having established with irresistible force all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, proceeds to urge upon the Church at Rome a practical improvement of them. The first improvement of them is, to surrender up ourselves unfeignedly and unreservedly to God in a way of devout affection. The next is, to employ ourselves diligently for him in every office whereby we can benefit his Church and people. To the former of these the Apostle calls us in the first verse of this chapter: and to the latter, in the words which we have just read. But to this latter we are yet further called by the relation which we bear to the Church of God, whereof we are members: and in this view it is inculcated by the Apostle in our text.

Let us then consider,

I. The relation which we bear to one another—

As descendants of Adam, we are all members of one family, of which God is the universal Parent: but, as the redeemed of the Lord, we are brought into the nearest union with Christ, so as to be members of his body, and consequently to be "members also one of another." To elucidate more fully this important truth, we will distinctly notice,

1. Our

1. Our general connexion—

[All true Christians are parts of one great whole, even as the different members of our corporeal body are. All have their appropriate sphere of action, and ought to fulfil the peculiar duties for which they are fitted. Those who have a higher office in this mystical body have no ground for pride, seeing that "they have nothing which they have not received;" their place in the body, and their faculties, having been fore-ordained and given by Him "who divideth to every man severally as he will[a]." On the other hand, they who have the lowest office have no reason for discontent: for they, in their place, are as necessary to the perfection of the whole, as any other member whatever. If they have a lower office than others, they have comparatively less responsibility: and, if they discharge their office conscientiously for the good of the whole and the glory of God, their improvement of their one talent will as certainly be acknowledged and rewarded by God, as the improvement which others may make of their ten talents.]

2. Our mutual dependence—

[No man is independent: no man is sufficient for his own welfare: no man can say to any other, I have no need of you[b]. Every one is in want of many things that must be supplied by others: the eye needs the foot, as much as the foot needs the eye. No member possesses any thing for itself alone: the eye sees not for itself, nor does the ear hear for itself: it is for the whole that every member's faculties are given; and for the whole must be employed. If any member be afflicted, all the rest must sympathize with it, and administer to it: and if any member be particularly benefited, all the others must be partakers of its joy. Every one must consider the concerns of others as its own[c]: nor must any one draw back from the most self-denying offices for the good of others. Is a hand bruised? the feet, the eye, the tongue, the ear, must all exert their respective talents to procure relief. None must refuse to do what in him lies for the good of the others. The same members that now put forth their powers for the relief of one that is afflicted, may soon need from it a return of the same kind offices: and if any should say, I will give myself no trouble about this afflicted member, he will soon be made to see, that, by producing a schism in the body, he does the greatest injury to himself; it being impossible either to impart, or to withhold, the required assistance, without participating in the effects of its own conduct.]

3. Our

[a] 1 Cor. xii. 4—11. [b] ib. ver. 14—23.
[c] ib. ver. 25, 26. with Phil. ii. 4.

3. Our individual interest—

[The interest of every individual member is, to get its own powers invigorated and enlarged. The more penetrating the eye, or the more expert the hand, the more it will be able to advance the good of the whole. Now every member of the Church being united unto Christ as his living Head, he should seek from Christ such gracious communications as may fit him more for the discharge of every office to which he is called. Whatever situation the member may hold in the body, its duty, and its interest also, is the same. It will not be advanced by intruding into the offices of another, but by fulfilling its own, and getting a greater measure of activity and vigour in the discharge of them. In truth, each is advanced only in proportion as it contributes to the welfare of others. The feet, whilst keeping the whole body in health, enjoy health themselves: the hands, whilst they procure sustenance for the whole body, are themselves sustained: and in seeking the good of the whole, each advances most the glory of that blessed Saviour, whose members they are[d]. The Saviour's glory and the welfare of the Church are so identified, that they cannot be separated from each other[e].

Thus we see the truth and propriety of the comparison in our text: for as all the members of our body are united to the head, and to each other by the head; as they also receive life and nourishment from the head, and act in subserviency to it and by its direction; and finally, as they all have precisely the same interests, and have a perfect communion with each other in all that relates to their welfare; so it is with the Church of God: all are united to Christ by faith: all, by virtue of their union with him, are united with each other in him: all have their separate endowments for the good of the whole: all should look upon each other as members of their own body, as much as his hands or feet are: and all should feel with, and act for, every other member, precisely as for himself. O that this our relation to Christ and to each other were felt and realized among the saints of every communion under heaven!]

But our view of this relation will answer no good end, unless we attend to,

II. The duties arising from it—

The offices mentioned in our text, were, if not wholly, yet in a measure distinct, in the Apostolic age. There were two great leading offices; the "prophesying," or preaching of the word of God[f]; and "ministering"

[d] 1 Cor. x. 24. [e] ib. ver. 27. with Eph. iv. 15, 16.

[f] So the word frequently means; and does not *necessarily* include miraculous gifts. 1 Thess. v. 20.

nistering" to the temporal necessities of the Church, as the Deacons did[g]. Under these two classes all the remainder may be arranged. Connected with those who prophesied were those also who "taught" and "exhorted:" and connected with the Deacons' office were those who "ruled," or superintended the temporal concerns of the Church, "giving," and dispensing its alms, and "shewing mercy" to those whose afflictions called for more than ordinary tenderness and compassion. But it is obvious that these various offices, even admitting that some of them were in the first instance associated with miraculous powers, are, in substance, of perpetual use and authority in the Church of Christ: there must still be persons to administer both spiritual instruction and temporal relief; and in many instances, the offices are most advantageously united. Without entering into any minute distinctions of this kind, we will content ourselves with saying in general, that, whatever station any of us hold in the Church of Christ, or whatever office we be called to execute, we should execute it,

1. With care and diligence—

[Certainly "prophesying," or preaching the word of God, ought to be prosecuted with all imaginable care and diligence. We should, as "stewards of the mysteries of God," administer to every one his portion in due season. We should "give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine," "that so we may save both ourselves and them that hear us." We should "take heed to our Ministry that we fulfil it." In like manner, if we perform any other office, visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, relieving the necessitous, we should bestow much attention on the work, to execute it most for the benefit of the Church and the glory of God. It requires no small care to act so as most to counteract the effect of prejudice, and to render our efforts most beneficial to those for whom they are used. We must take care "not to let our good be evil spoken of, and not to defeat by imprudence what, by a due attention to times and circumstances, might have been advantageously accomplished[h]."]

2. With patience and perseverance—

[We must expect to meet with difficulties in every service which

[g] The Greek word shews this. [h] Matt. vii. 6.

which we are called to perform. But we must not be discouraged by them. We must go forward, like St. Paul, "not moved by any trials," "nor counting our lives dear to us," if we be called to sacrifice them in the way of duty. Whatever we may meet with, we must "not faint or be weary in well doing," but, "by patient continuance in it," approve ourselves faithful unto death. Sometimes the difficulties will arise from one quarter, and sometimes from another: sometimes they will assume the garb of humility, and make us pretend unfitness for the work we have undertaken. But we must guard against this delusion: it may be true enough, that we are unfit; but that unfitness may proceed from our own sloth and want of spirituality; in which case it is not an excuse for us, but an aggravation of our guilt. We should rise to the occasion: "If the axe be blunt, we should put to the more strength[i]:" and if we feel ourselves beginning to faint, we must intreat of God to "strengthen us with might in our inward man," and to "give us always all-sufficiency in all things." We do not mean by this to encourage any to undertake offices for which they are altogether unfit; but to guard you against "putting your hand to the plough, and looking back again:" for "if any man draw back, my soul, says God, shall have no pleasure in him." Possibly a want of success may be pleaded by us as an excuse: but that is no excuse. If, like Hosea, we were to labour for seventy years with little apparent benefit, it would be no reason for abandoning the Lord's work. "To plant and water," is our part; "to give the increase," is God's: and whether we have any success or not, our duty is the same, both to Christ our Head, and to all the members of his body. It should be sufficient for us to know, that we have laboured to do the will of God. If we see the fruit of our labours, well; we have reason to be thankful for it: but, if not, then we must be satisfied with the assurance, that, "though Israel be not gathered, yet shall God be glorious," yea, and our reward also shall be equally great: for "every man shall receive," not according to his success, but "according to his own labour[j]."]

3. With love and cheerfulness—

[We must do "nothing grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth in all things a cheerful giver." It may be that the conduct of those whose benefit we seek, may be less amiable than might be wished. In every department, whether the more public one of preachers, or the more private one of visiting the sick, we may find much perverseness and ingratitude. But our delight must be in our work: we must enter upon it readily, and perform it cheerfully; and heap coals

[i] Eccl. x. 10. [j] 1 Cor. iii. 8.

coals of fire on the heads of those who render evil for good. By kindness we may remove prejudice and conciliate regard: and by a want of it we may defeat our own most benevolent purposes. Study then a suavity of manner: if called to "speak the truth," speak it "in love;" and, as the Apostle says, "Let all your things be done with charity."

If it be said, that to practise this is difficult: true, it is so; yea, and impossible to those who know not their relation to Christ, and to one another: but to those who look to Christ as their living Head, and who receive out of his fulness, nothing is impossible: "Through Christ strengthening us we can do all things." Nor, if we regard our brother as a member of our own body, shall we find this so difficult: for who ever was backward to assuage his own pains, or relieve his own necessities? If, moreover, we consider the Lord Jesus Christ himself as relieved in the relief conferred on his distressed members, shall we then need any stimulus to exertion? No: it will be our joy to perform towards him every office of love. Thus think ye then, and thus act; and know, that "not even a cup of cold water shall lose its reward."]

DCCCCXLII.

CHRISTIAN DUTIES TO GOD AND MAN EXPLAINED.

Rom. xii. 9—12. *Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectionate one to another in brotherly love; in honour preferring one another: not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord: rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.*

THAT men, who wallow in all manner of uncleanness, should not like to hear the precepts of religion, is easy to be accounted for: but that persons professing godliness should be averse to them, is surprising. Yet it is a fact, that many, whose lives, as far as we can see, are moral, pour contempt upon moral instructions, as having no part in Evangelical religion. But these persons are directly at issue with that Apostle, whom they most exalt, and whom, in other respects, they affect to follow. Who is more diffuse, who more minute, than the apostle Paul, in the instructions which he gives respecting Christian duties? Let us attend to those which are here inculcated. If we took them singly, every one

of them would furnish matter for a separate discourse: but, as the Apostle has united them so closely together, we prefer taking them in their accumulated state; because, if by means of it we lose somewhat in point of distinctness, that loss will be more than supplied by the light which they will mutually reflect on each other, and the force that will be derived from a combination of them all.

The Apostle here states the Christian's duties,

I. In general—

[We must "abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good." The strength of these expressions deserves particular attention. Had we been told to avoid what was evil, and to practise what was good, it would have been sufficient for the regulation of our outward conduct. But religion is, to engage the heart; and is to rectify, not merely our acts, but our habits, our dispositions, our *taste*[a]. Sin must be hateful to us: and not gross sin only, but all sin without exception. It is not merely to be formidable to us on account of its penal consequences, but hateful on account of its odious qualities. As "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," so are we to be of purer hearts than to regard it with any other feeling than that of utter "abhorrence." God calls it "that abominable thing which his soul hateth:" and in precisely the same light should we view it. The circumstance of its being common, or fashionable, or profitable, or pleasant, should make no difference in our feelings towards it; nor should we be at all more reconciled to it, because the world choose to call it venial. Every deviation from God's holy law, every opposition to his revealed will, we should consider as debasing, defiling, damning; and every temptation to depart so much as an hair's breadth from the perfect line of rectitude, we should resist even unto blood: "We should resist unto blood, striving against sin[b]."

In like manner, and to a like extent, we must "cleave unto that which is good," or, as the word imports, be *glued* unto it[c]. The effect of glue is to unite things together with such a degree of tenacity, that they cannot afterwards be separated. Now in this way should our souls, when once brought into contact with good, adhere to it, and form with it an indissoluble union. Whether it be good principles or good practice that we are called to embrace, we must never afterwards let them go: "We must buy the truth and sell it not."

[a] Rom. viii. 5. φρονεῦσιν.
[b] Heb. xii. 4.
[c] κολλώμενοι, *agglutinati.* Beza.

not." Whatever force be used to separate us from the thing which is really good, we must be firm and unmoved. If, like the Hebrew Youths, we be menaced with a fiery furnace, we must be stedfast to our purpose, "not counting our lives dear to us, so that we may but fulfil the will of God, and finish our course with joy[d]." To every one who would draw us from the path of duty, we must make this reply, "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but do what we know to be his will[e]."]

The Apostle, having thus briefly declared our duty in general terms, proceeds to speak of it,

II. In a more specific manner—

Of those which he particularizes we shall be called to notice three; namely, the duties,

1. Of kindness—

[Here again the language is such as God alone could inspire. Such a sentiment as is here expressed, we are well persuaded, never entered into the mind of an uninspired man: nor do we conceive that it can be expressed with equal brevity and elegance in any other language under heaven. Parents instinctively feel a most tender affection for their offspring. Even the brute creation are penetrated with it perhaps as strongly as the human kind. It arises out of the relation in which they stand to the object of their regards. Now such an attachment we should feel towards all the members of Christ's mystical body: yea, we should not merely feel it, as from instinct, but *cultivate it from principle*[ee]. But, inasmuch as this may be only, as it were, an animal feeling, we must have it tempered and refined "with brotherly love." In brotherly love there is an union proceeding from a correspondence of mind, and a reciprocation of good offices and kind returns: and this feeling united with the former, knits together the hearts of men in a way that cannot be expressed, nor indeed conceived by any, who are not themselves the subjects of it. It exists not in nature: it is produced only by grace: but, wherever it does exist, it raises the object so high in our estimation, that we seem to ourselves low in comparison of him; and, consequently, it makes us "prefer him in honour before ourselves." This sentiment is always mutual: each party casts a veil over the defects of the other, and views only his excellencies; whilst, on the other hand, he is slow to admire his own virtues, and intent rather on humbling himself for his faults. This disposition, I say, Believers cultivate towards

[d] Acts xx. 24. [e] Acts iv. 19, 20. [ee] φιλόστοργοι.

towards all who are of the household of faith; and all of them thus meeting together upon the same ground, "each esteems the other better than himself[f]."

Now then we call upon you, Brethren, to shew forth this fruit of the grace ye have received. This is the kind of love, and this the measure, which you are to manifest towards all the children of God: and in proportion only as you manifest it, have you any evidence that you belong to Christ[g]. "If you love him that begat, you cannot but love those who are begotten of him."]

2. Of diligence—

[Religion is not a sentimental feeling only, but a practical and influential power. It produces energy and activity in every soul in which it resides. It regards sloth as one of its most destructive adversaries; and maintains against it an incessant warfare. Believer, hear your duty in relation to this important matter: You must "not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Whatever be the office which you have to perform, it is assigned you by the Lord Jesus Christ, whose servant you are: and you must address yourself to it with an energy of mind, putting forth all your vigour, to execute it as speedily and as completely as you can. You must shake off sloth and listlessness; ever remembering, that "he who is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." It is wisely ordained of God, that "the idle soul shall suffer hunger, but that the diligent hand shall make rich." "Whatever therefore your hand findeth to do, do it with all your might." The consideration, that in all that you are called to do you serve the Lord Christ, should be a constant stimulus to your mind. This is particularly and strongly set forth by the Apostle in relation to servants[h] — — — and it applies equally to every person under heaven. Oh, contemplate that passage in reference to yourselves, and to all the duties of your place and station: and, whether you have received more or less to trade with, labour to improve it to the utmost before the day of reckoning shall arrive. But bear in mind, that your diligence will then only be regarded as a service done to Christ, when you act from an immediate regard to his authority, and with a special view to his glory.]

3. Of constancy—

[In your endeavours to serve the Lord, you will doubtless have to encounter many difficulties. There will be "fightings without, and fears within." But, whatever tribulation you may be

[f] Phil. ii. 3.
[g] John xiii. 34, 35. & 1 John iii. 14.
[h] Col. iii. 22—24.

be called to suffer for the Lord's sake, you must look to the end for a sure and ample recompence of all your labours, and patiently endure whatever God may see fit to lay upon you, calling upon him continually for mercy, and for grace to help you in the time of need. This is the direction given you in our text; you are to be "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer." You are "never to faint or be weary in well-doing;" but to take the promises of God as your support; and, in humble confidence that not one jot or tittle of them shall ever fail, you are to "hold fast the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end." The husbandman plows in hope and sows in hope, and waits patiently for the harvest: and thus must you do. There may be many a storm, and many a blighting wind; but you must commit your every care to God, and expect from him a full, a rich, a sure reward: for his unchanging promise is, that "in due season you shall reap, if you faint not." At times you will find prayer a most arduous task: there is in the heart of man a continual proneness to draw back from God, and to restrain prayer before him. But you must not yield to this sad propensity: you must "continue instant in prayer;" knowing that, "if you ask not, you cannot have;" but if you persevere in earnest and importunate supplications, you must, you cannot but, prevail; yea, you shall be "more than conqueror over all" that can oppose your spiritual progress.]

SEE then from hence What true religion is;

1. How extensive in its offices!

[It comprehends the whole circle of good and evil: it prescribes a line of conduct for us in every thing that relates either to God or man: it occupies, and calls forth into action, every faculty of the soul. Its energies are universal, and without intermission. As reason sits at the helm, and directs the course of the natural man, being so incorporated with him, as it were, as to regulate him unsolicited and unperceived, so does religion preside in the soul of the spiritual man, and direct him in whatever relates either to time or eternity. There is nothing, either great or small, on which it does not exert an influence. O Brethren, seek to have religion enthroned in your hearts, and performing in your minds the same offices as reason executes in the minds of unconverted men. Let it be a living principle within you, regulating your every action, word, and thought.]

2. How lovely in its operations!

[See religion putting Christ's yoke upon rebellious man, and "bringing his every thought into captivity to the obedience of

of Christ[i]:" See it giving to man the very mind of Christ; making him love what Christ loves, and hate what Christ hates, and walking in all things as Christ walked: See it uniting in the bonds of tenderest love the whole family of Christ: See it stirring up every member of that family to activity in all the duties of his place and station, that none shall have any fault to find against him, or any negligence to lay to his charge: and lastly, See it bringing him into a state of habitual fellowship with his God, and a blessed foretaste of the glory that shall be revealed. Is not *this* good? Is not this lovely? Yes, inexpressibly lovely is it: and if men "see not a beauty and a comeliness in it for which it is to be desired," it is because "they are blinded by the god of this world[k]." O Beloved, seek to recommend the Gospel, by thus imbibing its spirit, and exhibiting its efficacy in your lives. Let not your hatred of sin, or your love of holiness, be questioned for one moment: but press forward in the habitual exercise of humble love, of unremitting diligence, and of unshaken constancy; "that men, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven."]

[i] 2 Cor. x. 5. [k] 2 Cor. iv. 4.

DCCCCXLIII.

SYMPATHY RECOMMENDED.

Rom. xii. 15. *Rejoice with them that do rejoice; and weep with them that weep.*

AS creatures, we have many duties to perform towards our Creator: and, as members of one universal family, we have duties also towards each other. We all participate one common lot. The present state is subject to great varieties of good and evil; and all in their turn experience occasional alternations of joy and sorrow, of elevation and depression. In these successive changes, we naturally look for some to sympathize with us. We expect, that they who are partakers of humanity, should feel some interest in our affairs: and, if we find no one that has a heart in unison with our own, we seem to ourselves as outcasts from the human race. Now the dispositions which we expect to find exercised towards us, we are called to exercise towards others. The joys and sorrows of others should, as it were by sympathy,

sympathy, be made our own: we should "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

That this grace may be more cultivated amongst us, we will endeavour to shew,

I. The nature and extent of Christian sympathy—

Sympathy is that feeling of the mind whereby we enter into the concerns of others as if they were our own. Not that we are to interfere with others as "busy-bodies in other men's matters;" but we should have such a friendly disposition towards them, as to participate both in their joys and sorrows, and to have corresponding emotions excited by them in our own minds. This is a duty incumbent on every Child of man: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth[a]:" And again, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others[b]."

Now,

1. There is scope for the exercise of this grace *in reference to men's temporal concerns*—

[Are any afflicted in mind, or body, or estate? We should be ready to act towards them as Job's friends did under his afflictions: "they met by appointment, to mourn with him and to comfort him; and they were so overwhelmed with his sorrows, that they were incapacited for any active exertions in his behalf for the space of seven days and seven nights[c]." This silence of theirs has been misconstrued by many, as if the time so spent had been occupied in uncharitable reflections, to which they dared not give vent. But those who have been conversant with scenes of woe, and have been suitably impressed by them, will be at no loss to account for the effect produced: lighter sorrows would soon have called forth observations of some kind, either from the sufferer or his friends: but such overwhelming griefs as his, astonished, stupified, and silenced all: and in proportion as our sympathy is deep, will be the reverential awe with which we shall approach the sufferer, and the tender caution with which we shall address him.

It may be said, that such feelings well became them, as friends of the afflicted saint; but that it is unreasonable to look

[a] 1 Cor. x. 24. [b] Phil ii. 4. See also Heb. xiii. 3.
[c] Job ii. 11—13.

look for any such emotions towards a stranger, and still more towards an enemy. To this we answer, that, though friendship will of course heighten our feelings, and more requisite sensations will be excited in us by the sight of a suffering *saint*, who is as a member of Christ's body[d], than would be called forth towards one who stood in no such relation to Christ, yet our compassion should be deep and tender towards all. The good Samaritan has shewn us how we should act towards any one, even though he should be of a nation that was hostile to us[e]: and David has shewn us how we should conduct ourselves towards him, even though he were our bitterest enemy: "When they were sick," says he, "my clothing was sackcloth; and I humbled my soul with fasting: I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother[f]."

In like manner we should be prepared to rejoice with those who are brought into circumstances of a more pleasing nature. We see an example of this in the friends of Elizabeth. It was reckoned a great affliction to a woman to be barren: and such had Elizabeth been, till she was arrived at an age when she had no reasonable expectation of ever seeing her shame removed. But it pleased God in his mercy to visit her, and to give her a son in her old age: and when she was delivered of the child, her friends and relations came from every quarter to congratulate her on the happy event[g]. This was a fruit and evidence of their love: and wherever love is, it will be sure to operate in this manner: we shall not be indifferent to the happiness of others, but shall find our own augmented by every accession of happiness to others: and, if "the man who has recovered his straying sheep," or "the woman who has found her lost piece of money," call upon us for our congratulations[h], we shall feel real delight in the exercise and expression of our most benevolent affections.

Such is the disposition which we should cultivate towards all the sons and daughters of affliction; for in the exercise of it we perform a most important duty towards them, as members of one common family; and at the same time we resemble our common Parent, of whom it is said, that "his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel," and, that "he delighteth also in the prosperity of his servants."]

2. But the most urgent calls for it are *in reference to men's spiritual concerns*—

[The joys or sorrows which arise from the things of time and sense are comparatively of little consequence: but those that

[d] 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26. [e] Luke x. 30—37. [f] Ps. xxxv. 13, 14.
[g] Luke i. 57, 58. [h] Luke xv. 4—6, 8, 9.

that are connected with the eternal world are of infinite importance. Are any of our fellow-creatures mourning by reason of their sins, which have grown up unto heaven, and are a load upon their conscience too heavy for them to bear? How should we pant after an opportunity to make known to them the glad tidings of salvation through a crucified Redeemer; that so we may "give unto them the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness!" Are any in danger of being "turned away from their stedfastness?" How should we burn with holy impatience to ascertain their state, and to "establish their hearts[i]!" In a word, We should so feel with all the members of Christ's mystical body, as to be able to say with the Apostle, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not[k]?"

Nor should our compassion be withheld from those who are insensible of their guilt and danger: on the contrary, they on this very account require it so much the more. Like Paul, we should "have continual heaviness and sorrow in our hearts for our Brethren's sake[l];" and, like our blessed Lord, we should weep over them, though we knew that they were just ready to imbrue their hands in our blood[m].

If, on the other hand, any return to their Father's house, how should we rejoice over them, and join in the pious festivities of prayer and praise[n]! If afterwards they advance in the divine life, our joy and exultation should be proportionably increased[o]. The angels in heaven are not indifferent spectators of such events[p]; and should we? No: next to the salvation of our own souls, we should pant after, and delight in, the spiritual welfare of all around us.]

Such is the nature, and such the extent, of Christian sympathy: the value of which, however, will be better seen, if we consider,

II. The benefits resulting from it—

It is of incalculable use,

1. To him by whom it is exercised—

[The heart of man by nature is selfish: but grace expands it; and, by interesting it in the behalf of others, gives scope for the exercise of better feelings. The man whose cares and pleasures centre all in self, has his happiness extremely contracted, at the same time that it is also of a low and sordid character. But the man who has learned to sympathize

[i] 1 Thess. iii. 5. [k] 2 Cor. xi. 29. [l] Rom. ix. 2.
[m] Luke xix. 41. [n] Luke xv. 24, 32. [o] 1 Thess. iii. 6—10.
[p] Luke xv. 7, 10.

sympathize with others, derives pleasure from all around him, and makes all the happiness he beholds his own. The smiles of universal nature, the shining of the sun, the verdure of the fields, the cheerful aspect of the different tribes and orders of the animal creation, all diffuse a peace and serenity through his mind, and draw forth into exercise the principles of benevolence within him. The comforts also with which the various classes of his fellow-creatures are favoured, inspire him with a sense of gratitude to the great Source of all. The accounts which from time to time he hears of the wider spread of religion, and the consequent augmentation of happiness in the world, fill him with joy, and stir him up to the delightful employment of prayer and praise. Thus his sources of happiness are greatly multiplied, whilst the sensations of it are purified and refined.

If it be said, that by sympathy with the afflicted his pains are also multiplied; we answer, that *in appearance* they are so, but that *in reality* they are not. True it is, that many things which others behold without emotion, create within him a sensation of grief: but it must be remembered, that the grief of sympathy does not corrode, like other grief: on the contrary, it induces what, if it did not sound too paradoxical, we would call, a pleasurable pain. The sigh of pity and the tear of love may, in this respect, be compared with the sighs and tears of penitential sorrow: they diffuse a sweetness over the mind, as being evidences of the operation of a gracious principle, which God approves: whilst at the same time they reconcile a man to all his own personal trials, which always appear the lighter, in proportion as he is conversant with the trials of those around him.

Thus the very exercise of sympathy has its own reward.]

2. To those towards whom it is exercised—

[The sympathy of a friend does not at all affect *the causes* of sorrow; but it most materially affects *its pressure* upon the mind. It is as if a person took hold of a load which almost crushed us with its weight, and bore a part of it together with us. The very opening of our griefs is itself somewhat of a relief to a burthened soul: and the beholding of another, under the influence of love, participating with us our sorrows, and making them his own, wonderfully assuages the pain we feel. The sense we have of his kindness operates as a balm to heal our wounds. By the love we experience, our thoughts are diverted from the troubles we endure; and are turned for a season into the more pleasing channel of reciprocal affection, and of gratitude to a gracious God. Thus, by means of sympathy, the sorrows of the afflicted are greatly lightened.

On

On the other hand, the joys of any person are by the same means greatly increased. By every fresh congratulation, they are revived in the mind from time to time: the fire, which, for want of such stirrings, would have languished, is resuscitated; and oil is poured, as it were, upon the flame.

'But these things are rather matters of experience than of abstract discussion: to be known and understood, they must be felt.]

3. To the Church at large—

[Where these amiable feelings are displayed in full force and activity, the cause of Christ is greatly promoted. The beauty and excellence of Christianity is seen. Men cannot, or will not, judge of it from its principles; but they cannot help judging of it from the effects which they behold. The persons who beheld our blessed Lord at the tomb of Lazarus, were struck with his sympathy in this particular view: "When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in his spirit, and was troubled: and, on his coming to the grave, Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, *Behold, how he loved him*[q]!" So, when persons behold Christians participating with others freely in their joys and sorrows, they are constrained to say, Behold how these Christians love one another; yea, and not one another only, but all around them, strangers and enemies, as well as friends! The prevalence of such dispositions goes further to silence gainsayers, and to win souls, than all the most laboured arguments of learned theories: religion speaks to them here in a language which they cannot but understand and feel.]

Here, in conclusion, we cannot but OBSERVE,

1. How poor and inefficacious is the religion of the world!

[The world's religion consists almost entirely of forms, of forms without either life or power. Certainly Christianity, even as professed by the world, has advanced the cause of general benevolence: but that benevolence extends *not* to the concerns of the soul. A worldly Christian can see thousands perishing in their sins, and not stretch out a hand to their relief, nor utter one sigh on their account: and, as for all experimental religion, whether of joy or sorrow, he derides it as the fruit of a weak or distempered imagination. The character of such persons may be seen in the elder brother in the parable, who, when solicited to join in the festivities occasioned by his brother's return, vented his spleen in unkind reflections, both on the prodigal who had returned, and on

[q] John xi. 33—36.

on his father who had received him to his arms. The most benevolent of worldly men has not a string in his heart that is in unison with one who is cast down with penitential sorrow, or that is exalted with the joys of faith. No: his principles rise not so high: his convictions are only intellectual; and they can never be productive of what is spiritual. Even in their *moral* effects they operate to but a small extent; but, in respect of *spiritual* sympathy, they bear no fruit at all. Oh, Brethren, see from hence how poor and defective that religion is which generally passes under the name of Christianity: it is Christianity without Christ, in its principles; it is Christianity without love, in its effects. It boasts itself to have proceeded from the Sun of Righteousness; but it has neither the light nor heat that proceed from his glorious rays: it is a shadow without a substance; a name without a reality. If it proceeded really from Christ, it would make us to resemble him in our spirit and our conduct.]

2. How lovely and operative is the religion of Christ!

[Sympathy is of the very essence of Christ's religion: "Bear ye one another's burthens," says the Apostle, "and so fulfil the law of Christ[r]." Yes: he has taught us this both by precept and example: he bids us "love one another, *as he has loved us*[s]." And how has he loved us? He pitied us in our fallen state, and came down from the bosom of his Father to seek and save us. And during the whole of his abode upon earth, but more especially in his last hours, "he bare our infirmities and carried our sorrows[t]." And at this present moment we are authorized to say, that "he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities[u]," and that there is neither a benefit nor an injury that we receive, but he feels it as done immediately to himself[x]. Such is the effect which the Gospel produces upon all who receive it in spirit and in truth. Let a sense of Christ's love to us be duly impressed on our hearts; and it will immediately excite in us a love to all mankind, though in a more especial manner to the household of faith. See, with your own eyes, Brethren; What is it that has given birth to Bible Societies, and Mission Societies, and to numberless other Institutions that respect the welfare of men's souls? It is the Gospel: the Gospel, faithfully administered, and affectionately received. Such ever was, and ever will be, the fruit of faith; for "faith worketh by love." Seek ye then to become possessed of a true and living faith: and know, that the more entirely you live by faith on the Son

[r] Gal. vi. 2.
[s] John xv. 12.
[t] Isai. liii. 4. Matt. viii. 17.
[u] Heb. iv. 15.
[x] Matt. xxv. 4. Acts ix. 4. Zech. ii. 8.

Son of God, as having loved you, and given himself for you, the more you will drink into his spirit, and be transformed into his blessed image: nor will you fix any other bounds to your sympathies, than He has affixed to his.]

DCCCCXLIV.

OVERCOMING EVIL WITH GOOD.

Rom. xii. 21. *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

THE writings of the Old Testament exhibit a system of morals incomparably superior to any that was ever promulgated by the wisest philosophers. In extent it equals the New Testament. It is quite a mistake to say that our Lord inculcated sublimer morals than ever had been revealed before: he only removed the false glosses by which the commands of God had been obscured, and enforced the observance of those commands by motives of a higher nature. Still however it must be confessed, that the New Testament brings the sublimer precepts more clearly into view, and expatiates upon them in a more authoritative and convincing manner. This appears in the injunction before us, which is as concise, as comprehensive, as forcible, as words could express it.

In discoursing upon this precept we shall endeavour to mark,

I. Its impórt—

The "evil" here spoken of does not relate to sin, but to suffering; and comprehends all those injuries, whether real or imaginary, which we are called to endure. In reference to this, two questions arise:

1. When may we be said to be overcome by it?

[We are not overcome by evil merely because we are crushed by it; for St. Paul, when "pressed out of measure by his troubles in Asia," "thanks God for enabling him always to triumph in Christ[a]:" and declares, that while "we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter, we may be more than conquerors[b]." But we are then vanquished by it, *when we are diverted by it from the path of duty.*

Suppose, on account of the trial being exceeding heavy, we

[a] 2 Cor. i. 8. & ii. 14. [b] Rom. viii. 36, 37.

we are tempted to doubt whether it can, or will, be overruled for our good: then we are vanquished; because we question the truth of God, who has said, that "*all* things should work together for his people's good:" our faith has failed, and we are overcome.

Suppose the injury done to us has irritated and inflamed our minds, so that we give way to anger and impatience: then also we are overcome; because we ought to "possess our souls in patience[c]," and to "let patience have its perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing[d]."

Suppose, though no particular vehemence shew itself at the time, we yet are induced to harbour secret resentment in our minds against our enemy: then we are overcome; because we should love our enemies[e], and be more concerned for the evil which they do to their own souls, than for any thing which they do, or can do, to us.

Suppose, either through the fear of evil, or through actual distress, we are induced to relax our zeal in the Lord's service, or to make any sinful concessions, then also we are vanquished: for we submit to sin rather than to suffering; we have failed in our integrity; we are overcome. We should value a good conscience more than life itself[f]; and when we make shipwreck of it, we shew that our enemy has gained the victory over us.

If we hold fast our faith, our patience, our love, our integrity, then are we conquerors, even though we die in the conflict: but if in any of these respects we fail, then are we overcome, even though we crush our adversary, and defeat his more immediate projects.]

2. How are we to overcome it—

[We gain a victory over it in part, when we do not suffer it to injure our souls. But we must not be contented with such a negative triumph; we should endeavour to overcome the hostility of our enemy; and this can be effected only by returns of good. "If he curse, we must bless; if he despitefully use us and persecute us, we must pity him and pray for him[g]." "If he hunger, we must feed him; if he thirst, we must give him drink;" with all the tenderness and compassion that we would to a querulous and untoward infant[h]. We shall in this way "heap coals of fire upon his head," to melt him into love[i]. It is true, many are so obdurate, that no returns of good can ever dissolve their hearts: yet the effect of such persevering kindness is inconceivably great, and will sometimes extort confessions of our innocence even from the most infuriated

[c] Luke xxi. 19. [d] Jam. i. 4. [e] Luke vi. 35.
[f] John xii. 25. [g] Matt. v. 44.
[h] ψώμιζε means, '*Feed him as an infant.*' Rom. xii. 20. [i] Ib.

infuriated enemies. We can scarcely find in the annals of the world a more cruel or inveterate enemy than Saul; yet David's repeated exercises of forbearance and kindness towards him constrained him to confess his own wickedness, and the distinguished excellence of the person whom he persecuted[k]. Such a victory as that is greater than the most successful warrior could ever boast: and we should aim at similar conquests: we should strive, not to crush our enemy by force, but to overcome his enmity by love.]

We cannot dismiss such an important precept as this without endeavouring more distinctly to set before you,

II. Its excellence—

The moment that the precept is presented to the mind we cannot fail of admiring its simplicity, and, at the same time, its depth. But that our views of it may be more distinct, we observe,

1. It counteracts all our evil propensities—

[When we are injured or insulted, what a tumult of passion is apt to arise in our breast; and how ready are we to render evil for evil! If we forbear avenging ourselves at the time either by word or deed, we still feel a disposition to retaliate, and are ready to wreak our vengeance upon our adversary by private complaints of his conduct, though from prudence or timidity we do not maintain a contest with him to his face. Long and bitter are the resentments of many, even while they appear to be reconciled, and perhaps delude themselves with the confidence that they have forgiven their enemy. But this precept lays the axe to the root of all secret animosity as well as open hostility. It goes not to the act merely, but the principle: it requires that all the enmity that is in our hearts should be slain; and that love alone should reign there. Were this once effected, there is not an evil in the soul which would not have received its death wound: for "love is the fulfilling of the law."]

2. It assimilates us to Jesus Christ—

[To what an extent has our blessed Lord carried this principle! When we were his enemies, yea, when the whole universe were up in arms against him, he did not execute upon *us* the vengeance we deserved, but came down from heaven to convert and save us. And by what means did he propose to save us? Was it by a mere act of power? No: it was by bearing our sins, and dying in our stead. What astonishing love

[k] 1 Sam. xxiv. 10, 11, 16, 17, 18. & xxvi. 21.

love was this! But further, when he had come into the world, and his people with one voice had put him to death, still, so far from bearing resentment against them in his heart, he, after he had risen from the dead, commanded that his Gospel should be preached first of all in that city where he had been crucified, and that the offers of salvation should be first made to the very people who had imbrued their hands in his blood[l]. And how glorious were the triumphs of his love! By the very first sermon that was preached in his name, three thousand of his enemies were convinced of their wickedness, and brought to repentance. Similar to this was the mercy he vouchsafed to the persecuting, blaspheming Saul: he appeared to him in the midst of his mad career, and, by this transcendent act of love, changed a bitter and cruel enemy into a holy and active apostle. Thus he overcame evil with good; and in proportion as we imitate his conduct we shall be transformed into his likeness.]

3. It would make a very heaven upon earth—

[What a very hell is this world, where the passions are let loose, and men are left to perpetrate all that is in their hearts! Even under the restraint of wholesome laws there are so many quarrels generated, and so many resentments harboured, that there is scarcely a society or a family in which real harmony prevails. But if this precept were universally obeyed, how different a world would this appear! From the combating of evil with love, there would soon be no evil to contend with: for certainly they who rendered nothing but good unto their enemies, would never render evil to their friends; or if any unintentional evil were done, the very remembrance of it would be quickly lost in returns of love. O blessed state! When shall the happy time arrive, when "the wolf and the lamb shall thus dwell together, and the child shall have no ill to fear when playing on the hole of the asp, or of the cockatrice den?" Surely this may well be called, "The reign of Christ upon earth;" for it will be the brightest image of heaven, or rather heaven itself come down on earth.]

As a further IMPROVEMENT of this precept, we shall,

1. Guard it—

[We are not to imagine that this precept requires us to renounce our *civil rights;* for St. Paul, on proper occasions, asserted his rights as a Roman citizen[m]: nor does an obedience to it preclude the exercise of *legitimate authority;* for the Magistrate would have been invested with power to no purpose, if he were not allowed to exercise it in the support of virtue and the punishment of vice[n]. Parents, Masters, Ministers,

[l] Luke xxiv. 47. [m] Acts xvi. 37. & xxii. 25. & xxv. 10, 11.
[n] Rom. xiii. 4.

Ministers, must exercise the authority committed to them. It is the vindictive disposition that is forbidden, and the unwearied exercise of love that is inculcated — — —]

2. Enforce it—

[Many arguments will arise in our corrupt minds against the discharge of this sublime and self-denying duty: 'The persons who have used us ill, do not deserve kind treatment; and the exercise of continued kindness to them will only encourage them to proceed in their injurious conduct; whereas a proper display of spirit on our part will tend to intimidate and restrain them.' This may appear to be just reasoning; but it is directly contrary to God's command. We are not to consider what others deserve to suffer, but what we are required to do. As to the use that others will make of our kindness, that is no concern of ours; we have only to obey God, and leave all events to him. To yield, to turn the left cheek to him that smites us on the right, and to return good for evil, may sound to us as "hard sayings;" but they are the path of duty, of honour, and of happiness — — —]

3. Give directions for the performance of it—

[*Get a deep sense of your own vileness.*—When you are thoroughly sensible how many talents you owe to your Heavenly Master, you will not very readily take your fellow-servant by the throat for the few pence that he may owe to you.

Contemplate frequently the mercy which Christ has vouchsafed, and is daily vouchsafing, to you.—How will this put you to shame, when you feel the risings of anger or revenge against even your bitterest enemy! Surely you will fall upon your knees before God, and pray for grace to "forgive others even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you:" and *that* not thrice, or "seven times, but seventy times seven."

Be much in prayer to God for the assistance of his Holy Spirit.—Without his aid you can do nothing: but there is nothing so great, which you shall not be able to do through Christ strengthening you[o].]

[o] Phil. iv. 13.

DCCCCXLV.

DUTY TO CIVIL GOVERNORS.

Rom. xiii. 1—7. *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to*

good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good; and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But, if thou do that which is evil, be afraid: for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour.

THE office of Ministers is, to preach the Gospel of Christ. But whilst they preach the *doctrines* of the Gospel, they must not overlook its *duties*; nor, in stating its duties, must they pass by those which pertain to us as members of a civil community, any more than those which concern us in any other station or relation of life. On the contrary, St. Paul gave to Titus, and in him to all other Ministers, this express injunction: "Put them (the professors of Christianity) in mind to be subject to Principalities and Powers, and to obey Magistrates[a]. In this also St. Paul himself has set us an example; and *that* too with a fulness and minuteness far beyond what he had resorted to on any other branch of Christian morals. There was perhaps a reason for his doing this in his Epistle to the Romans, rather than in any other of his Epistles. Rome was the seat of the Imperial Government; and there, for a very long period, the Jews had been in bad repute, as a rebellious people. Nor was this without reason: for the Jews had an idea that they *ought* not to submit to any other Governor than one raised up from among their own brethren: and from hence they were frequently led to resist the Civil Magistrates; especially at those seasons when the revenue was collected[b]. In these sentiments the Christians also were supposed to participate. It was desirable therefore that the Apostle should put them on their guard; because, if they should indeed be found enemies

[a] Tit. iii. 1. [b] Acts v. 37. & Luke xiii. 1.

enemies to the Government under which they lived, they would furnish the Heathen with an unanswerable argument against them, and would, in fact, arm all the Civil Powers for their destruction. On the other hand, if the Christians at Rome should shew themselves peaceable and obedient subjects, they would conciliate the regard of their Governors, and recommend a similar conduct in all other places.

In the passage before us, the Apostle shews us,

I. In what light Civil Magistrates should be viewed—

By whatever name the Ruling Powers are designated among men, they are to be regarded as,

1. Governors for God—

[God is the Governor of all the earth: and, as all power is derived from him, so all power is delegated by him; the possessor of it being his Representative and Vicegerent. Even in heaven he has established different ranks and orders among the angels [c]: and on earth also he has seen fit that a similar order should be maintained. Nay, when there were yet but two people upon the earth, he ordained that one should rule the other [d]. From that time the parents were the natural governors of their children: and, as successive families were formed, the rising generations continued under the same head, as branches from the same root. When these families became a tribe, the original parent was still the head of that tribe. Thus as mankind were multiplied upon the face of the earth, the different nations, too numerous and widely spread to be governed by one man, had their respective Governors some in one way, and some in another. Whatever shape the different Governments assumed, monarchical, aristocratical, or democratical, still the power was God's, in whomsoever it was vested: and, as his Representatives, they possessed and exercised a portion of his authority: "There is no power, but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God:" "the pillars of the earth are the Lord's; and he hath set the world upon them [e]."]

2. Benefactors from God—

[The office of Magistrates is to do all in their power for the suppression of iniquity, and for the promotion of universal happiness. It is for these ends alone that power is put into their hands. They are to be "a terror to the workers of iniquity," and "not to bear the sword in vain:" but to all others they are "ministers for good," protecting them in the peaceful

[c] Eph. i. 21. Jude, ver. 9. [d] Gen. iii. 16. [e] 1 Sam. ii. 8.

peaceful enjoyment of every earthly blessing. Would we conceive aright of the benefits we derive from our Government, let us imagine such a state of things existing amongst us as occasionally existed in the land of Israel, when "there was no king in Israel, and every one did what was right in his own eyes[f]:" what enormities would be committed in every quarter of the land! If for the space of three days only all the functions of Government were suspended, and all were left at liberty to perpetrate whatever came into their hearts, we should soon see how much we have been indebted to the Legislature for enacting wholesome laws, and to the Magistracy for enforcing them. To the Government we owe it, that our persons are safe from injury, and our property from the depredation of lawless violence: and whilst "we sit, each under his own vine and fig-tree, none making us afraid," we should feel our obligations to those, who, by God's ordinance, have been, and continue day by day to be, the means and instruments of all our comfort. What Tertullus said in a way of flattery to Felix, we may, with the strictest truth, say respecting our Governors, that "by them we enjoy great quietness, and by their providence very worthy deeds are done to our whole nation[g]."]

From this view of their character, we are prepared to hear,

II. What regard should be paid to them—

The relation of Ruler and subject necessarily brings with it corresponding duties. Whilst they are caring and labouring for us, it is our duty,

1. To honour their persons—

[God says, respecting himself, "If I be a Father, where is my honour? if I be a master, where is my fear?" A portion of the same regard is due to Magistrates also, as his representatives and vicegerents upon earth. Hence, in reference to them, it is said in our text, "Render unto all their dues; fear, to whom fear is due; and honour, to whom honour." To speak harshly or contemptuously of them is highly unbecoming. To "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities," are among the leading features of many, who are a scandal to the Christian name[h]. We should consider, that they are necessitated to see with other eyes, and to hear with other ears, than their own: that for what they do they may have many reasons, which we are not acquainted with: that, if in any thing they err, it may be with the best intentions. In a word, we should form the most favourable judgment

[f] Judg. xvii. 6. & xxi. 25. [g] Acts xxiv. 2. [h] Jude, ver. 8.

8245

ment of all that they do, and give them credit for their motives, where we cannot altogether approve their actions. If we cannot praise, we should at least abstain from uttering against them any complaints and murmurs, or from speaking of them in disrespectful terms. What shame did Paul take to himself for uttering a reproachful word against his unjust and persecuting judge! he confesses that in so doing he had violated an express command, which says, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the Ruler of thy people[j]."

We should guard against an acrimonious sentiment arising even in our hearts[k]: and even when we are constrained to disapprove their conduct, instead of reviling them, we should cast a veil over their faults, as a duteous child would do over the faults of his parent.]

2. To submit to their authority—

[If a Ruler enjoin any thing that is clearly contrary to an express command of God, or forbid any thing which God has clearly enjoined, we are then to "obey God rather than man." The Hebrew Youths did right in refusing to fall down before the golden idol; as did Daniel also in continuing to offer supplications before his God. The commands of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, though the greatest Potentates on earth, were of no weight against the paramount authority of God. But where the laws that are enacted by human authority are not contrary to the revealed will of God, they must be obeyed; and *that* too, whether the authority that enforces them be subordinate or supreme: for thus says the apostle Peter; "Submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the King, as supreme; or unto Governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well: for so is the will of God[l]." And this allegiance is due from all persons, whatever be their rank, or age, or occupation; "Let *every* soul be subject to the higher powers:" and, if any take upon themselves to "resist the power, they shall receive to themselves damnation;" they shall be condemned before an earthly tribunal for violating the established laws; and they shall be yet further visited with God's indignation in another world, for having set at nought "*his* ordinances," and opposed themselves to *his* authority[m]. We must therefore "be subject to the Magistrate, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake."]

3. To support his office—

[Where power is vested for the public good, there must also expense be, to defray the charges of the dignity attached to

[j] Acts xxiii. 2—5. [k] Eccl. x. 20. [l] 1 Pet. ii. 13—15.
[m] See 2 Pet. ii. 10, 13. & Jude, ver. 8. 13.

to it. All the functions of Government also must of necessity be attended with expense, which the public of course must support. Hence there must be taxes of different kinds, some stated, as "tribute," and some occasional, as "custom," upon articles of commerce. These are "due" to the Civil Magistrate, and must be paid with cheerfulness and punctuality. There must be no endeavour, no wish, to evade any tax whatever. To defraud the revenue, is to defraud not the Government only, but every person that contributes to the support of Government; since, if the imposts that are laid on, prove inadequate to the necessities of the State, other taxes must be levied to supply the deficiency; and thus the honest must be burthened to pay what has been withheld by the dishonest. This is thought by many to be a light matter: and persons who are well able to pay their quota to the public purse, are not ashamed to defraud the revenue; yea, they will even boast of it, when they might with as much propriety boast of the most disgraceful actions they could possibly commit. Our blessed Lord, when, strictly speaking, he was not bound to pay a tax that was levied, chose to pay it, and even wrought a miracle in order to pay it; because he would not offend the collectors, who would have been unable to appreciate the grounds whereon he might have claimed an exemption[n]. Thus should we do: we should rather exceed on the side of liberality, than fall short through a want of integrity, or of zeal for the public service. To grudge such payments is most unreasonable and wicked. What would be thought of a man who should employ a watchman to protect his property, and then rob the watchman of his hire? Yet this is what we do, when by any means whatever we defraud the revenue: for Rulers and Magistrates are "ministers of God, attending continually upon this very thing:" their time is occupied in the discharge of their high office; and they have a claim upon us for whatever is necessary for the maintenance of their dignity, and the execution of their trust. We must therefore "render to all their dues; tribute, to whom tribute is due; and custom, to whom custom:" and, if in any respect or degree we withhold it from them, we differ but little from him who plunders their house, or robs them on the highway.]

We conclude with adding such ADVICE as the occasion requires—

1. Be thankful for the Constitution under which you live—

[It is generally agreed by those who have studied the Constitution of Britain, that it is the most perfect of any upon earth.

[n] Matt. xvii. 24—27.

earth. In no other State under heaven is there a greater measure of liberty combined with the same measure of security and strength. The extent of our civil and religious liberties is justly the boast of all who have the happiness to live in our favoured land. How different is our condition from that of the Roman Empire in the time of Nero, the time when St. Paul wrote this epistle! How different also we may add from the situation of our own country in the days of Mary, when so many of the excellent of the earth were burnt to death, for worshipping God according to their conscience! In our happy land, the poorest man amongst us is as much protected in his person and property as the richest; nor can the King himself oppress him contrary to law. Let us then be thankful for these mercies; and let us rally round the Constitution, to support it against all the devices of the disaffected, and the conspiracies of wicked men[o]. If Christians under such a Government as that of Nero were so strictly enjoined to approve themselves loyal and faithful, much more is it our duty to be so under such a Government as ours.]

2. Walk worthy of that better kingdom of which you profess to be subjects—

[This improvement of our subject is suggested by our Lord himself; who, on a question being put to him respecting the payment of tribute to the Roman Governor, answered, "Render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and unto God the things that are God's[p]." God, as we have before said, is the great Governor of all the earth; and he has established a kingdom, even the kingdom of his dear Son, who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords:" Now, as Christians, you profess to be the subjects of Christ; and you owe an unreserved obedience to all his commands. Under him you enjoy the most perfect liberty and protection, from sin and Satan, death and hell. For every act of fidelity towards him, you shall have an appropriate measure of "praise;" nor have you the smallest reason to fear his wrath, if you yield a prompt obedience to his commands. The approbation of earthly princes, and the rewards conferred by them, pertain to this life only; but those which our blessed Lord will confer, extend also to the life to come. "Be strong, therefore, and very courageous to observe and do all that he commands[q]." Honour him in your hearts: labour to advance also his interests in the world: account no sacrifice painful that he

[o] Preached Feb. 9th, 1817, on occasion of the assault made upon the Prince Regent, and of the proofs of conspiracies submitted to both the Houses of Parliament a few days before.

[p] Matt. xxii. 17—21. [q] Josh. i. 7.

he requires at your hands; but "be ready, if need be, to lay down your lives for his sake." "Be faithful unto death, and he will give you a crown of life."]

DCCCCXLVI.

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY ILLUSTRATED.

Rom. xiv. 17—19. *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ, is accepted of God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

TO have a clear view of Christian doctrines is necessary; but to have a just apprehension of the Christian spirit and temper is no less necessary: and it is much to be regretted, that where the doctrines are well understood, the Christian temper is often grievously overlooked: nay, the very importance of the doctrines is often made a pretext for exercising tempers most repugnant to vital Christianity. People are not willing to distinguish between the essentials, and the non-essentials, of religion. There is in every man a disposition to exalt some favourite sentiment of his own, and to press it upon others beyond what its relative importance requires; whereas the spirit of Christianity calls rather for mutual forbearance in relation to things indifferent, and mutual concessions, in order to the preservation of peace and harmony.

The scope of the chapter before us is to mark out a line of conduct for Christians in relation to this matter: and in this view it deserves the most attentive consideration. To present the subject before you in all its most important bearings, we shall,

I. Shew wherein practical Christianity consists—

[The Jewish religion consisted much in the observance of rites and ceremonies, which were marked with great precision, and enjoined under the severest penalties. The forbearing the use of certain kinds of food, the keeping as sacred certain times and seasons, and the complying with certain ordinances, were commanded with all the same authority as the Decalogue

Decalogue itself. But those things were to cease with that dispensation[a]: they were appointed only "till the times of reformation:" and now they are to be observed no longer[b]. "The kingdom of God," that is, the kingdom of Christ established in the heart, does not consist in them; "it is not in meat and drink," but in something more substantial, more excellent, more spiritual; namely, "in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Many interpret these words as importing faith in the "righteousness" of the Lord Jesus Christ, and "peace" through the blood of his cross, and "joy in the Holy Ghost" as the fruit of our acceptance with God. But we apprehend that these words relate rather to *holy and heavenly dispositions*, as contrasted with the spirit that is generated by an undue attachment to rites and ceremonies. We understand by them *an universal love of righteousness*, as opposed to a zeal for forms; *a peaceful state of mind*, as opposed to the irritation that is cherished, and the dissentions that are occasioned, by a contentious spirit; and *a joy in God*, as opposed to the self-complacency which is fostered by a self-righteous compliance which prescribed forms. The scope of the whole context seems to point to this interpretation, and to direct our thoughts into the channel marked out for us by the words of Balaam to Balak[c]; or by those of our Lord to the self-righteous Pharisees, "who paid tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, but neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith[d]."

In these things vital Christianity consists. The turning of the whole heart to the observance of God's laws, is the great promise of the Gospel, and the certain effect of it, wherever it is received in truth: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments to do them[e]." And again, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts[f]" ——— Nor is a peaceful disposition less certainly imparted by the Gospel: for love is the necessary fruit of faith[g], and forms the most striking feature in the character of every true Believer[h] ——— Joy also in the Holy Ghost will invariably accompany these holy dispositions: for the Holy Ghost delights to dwell where God is honoured, and man is loved for God's sake. In the hearts of such Believers "he will glorify the Lord Jesus, and will shed abroad the Father's love: he will fill them with joy unspeakable and glorified" ——— Such righteousness, such peace, and such joy, are the fruits and evidences of the reign of Christ in the soul:

[a] Heb. ix. 10. [b] Col. ii. 16—22. [c] Mic. vi. 6—8.
[d] Matt. xxiii. 23. [e] Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. [f] Jer. xxxi. 33.
[g] Gal. v. 6. [h] 1 John iii. 14.

soul: and in them, rather than in forms of any kind, does his kingdom consist.]

Having thus marked the nature of practical Christianity, we shall,

II. Point out its peculiar excellence—

The ordinances relative to meats and drinks were mere "beggarly elements:" they had no value at all, except as "shadows of good things to come." But these holy dispositions are truly valuable: and every man who cultivates them,

1. Is accepted of God—

[The observers of forms and ceremonies were not at all accepted, unless their services were accompanied with a suitable and corresponding frame of mind[1]; yea, rather they were hateful, even as the offering of swine's blood, or as murder itself[k]. But not so the services of which we have been speaking: they are truly pleasing in the sight of God; and the dispositions exercised are in his sight "an ornament of great price." Yes, "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness," and "will meet him who rejoiceth in working it[l]." There is no token of his love which he will not vouchsafe to those who cultivate a loving spirit, and seek all their happiness in him. "He will set his love upon them; and will hear and answer all their petitions: he will be with them in trouble: he will deliver them and honour them: with long life also will he satisfy them, and will shew them his full and complete salvation[m]."]

2. Is approved of men—

[Those who spend their zeal on the externals of religion may be commended by partisans, but they will never be respected by those who differ from them, nor indeed by their own party. The dispositions exercised by such persons are unamiable, and therefore they can never generate love in the breasts of any. But the holy man of God, that labours to fulfil all righteousness, and to promote the happiness of all around him, and to live in the constant enjoyment of his God, he, I say, has a testimony in the breasts of all, even of those who differ from him in things of less importance: and though from circumstances they may keep at a distance from him, they honour him in their hearts, and have an inward persuasion "that God is with him of a truth." The ungodly world indeed may hate him, just as they hated the Apostles and our Lord

[1] Isai. i. 11—14.
[k] Isai. lxvi. 3.
[l] Isai. lxiv. 5.
[m] Ps. xci 14—16.

Lord himself: but yet even they will feel an awe in his presence, and, at the very time that they revile and persecute him, have oftentimes the secret thought in their hearts, "If I were dying, I should be glad to be found in your state."]

We must not however overlook that which gives to these services their chief excellence—

[It is supposed that the person who performs these services is already Christ's subject, and servant, having through divine grace been converted to God, and "translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son:" and that, in performing them, he is not attempting to establish a righteousness of his own, but to "serve and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ." It is necessary that he keep this end in view; and that all that he does be done *for Christ*, that is, from a regard to his authority, and with a view to his glory. Indeed faith in Christ, and love to his name, are the only principles that will operate to the production of the dispositions before mentioned. A man may have the semblance of them without faith in Christ; but the reality he cannot have. In the mind of the Unbeliever, the circumstantials of religion will have an undue weight: in the Believer only will the essentials have their full scope and paramount ascendancy. When therefore we speak of these dispositions as accepted of God and approved of men, it is supposed that in them "we serve Christ," by whose grace alone we can do them, and through whom alone they can ever be accepted.]

Having now shewn the nature and excellence of practical Christianity, we shall, in conclusion,

III. Give some directions for the exercise of it—

The general direction in our text is, to "follow after the things that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another." But that the whole scope of the chapter may be brought more fully into view, we will descend somewhat more to particulars.

1. Lay not an undue stress on things indifferent—

[As amongst the Jews there were many who laid more stress on the washing of pots and cups than on obedience to God's commandments[n], so now there are many whose zeal has respect to little else than the circumstantials of religion. The Papists are ready to confine salvation to those who are within the pale of their Church: and almost every distinct sect of Protestants is ready to arrogate to itself the same exclusive

[n] Mark vii. 8, 9.

clusive privilege. It is grievous to think what mutual aversion has been created among Christians, by the circumstance of worshipping with, or without, a form of prayer, or by differences still less important. But things ought not so to be. We should lay no more stress on any thing than we find laid on it in the Scriptures of Truth. The fundamental doctrines of religion must be held fast, and sacrificed to none. The plain duties also of religion must be executed with a firmness that is immoveable: but whatever interferes not with these, should be left to the judgment and the conscience of every individual; neither being imposed on him as of necessity, nor exacted of him with rigour, nor made a ground of alienation from him. We should concede to others the liberty we claim for ourselves; and be more anxious to preserve an union of heart, than by dictation to produce an uniformity of sentiment. "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike." And what says St. Paul to this? Let the more powerful of the two compel the other to adopt his views? No: but, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind[o]."]

2. Be tender in judging those who differ from you—

[Those who saw their Christian liberty, despised their weaker brethren, for scrupling to eat what had been offered to an idol; whilst, on the other hand, they who doubted the lawfulness of eating such things, condemned their stronger brethren, as presumptuously disregarding the commands of God. A similar disposition to despise or condemn each other exists among the advocates for certain doctrines which have for ages divided the Church of God. Those who think they have a deeper insight into the Divine decrees, look down with pity and contempt on their less enlightened brethren; whilst these, on the other hand, feel embittered against the others, and load them with all manner of obloquy. Alas! alas! when shall the professed members of Christ's body cease to exercise such dispositions towards each other, and agree to cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance? When shall men cease to dogmatize, as if they were infallible? The probability is, that the truth lies not exclusively with either of these parties, but is found rather with those who receive with meekness, and interpret with diffidence, the apparently opposite declarations of God, and wait his time for the fuller explication of them. No man is in the exclusive possession of all truth; nay, persons may in some things pursue an opposite conduct, and yet both be right, because the things wherein they disagree may be matters of pure indifference[p]: therefore, whilst every man should seek to acquire the most correct sentiments,

[o] ver. 5. [p] ver. 6.

sentiments, every man should leave others to "stand or fall to their own master[q]."]

3. Be cautious in the exercise of your liberty—

[An action may be good in itself; yet it may become bad by being done in the presence of another who doubts its lawfulness, and may by means of it be induced to violate the dictates of his own conscience in following the example. This is a point well worthy of our attention. We should have respect to the consciences of others, and be careful "not to lay a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in our brother's way." As we should not presume to force him to act contrary to his conscience, so neither should we tempt him to do so, lest we lead him into sin, and thereby destroy his soul. Our blessed Lord laid down his life to save such persons; and shall we not forego a trifling gratification for their welfare? Yea, shall we, for the sake of some small indulgence, risk the plunging them into everlasting ruin? Shocking impiety! In so acting, we sin against Christ, and greatly endanger the salvation of our own souls. And, rather than be guilty of such wickedness, we should deny ourselves the most innocent gratification in the world: "If meat make our brother to offend, we should eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest we make our brother to offend[r]."]

4. Be anxious, not to proselyte to a party, but to edify your brother in love—

[Here almost all classes of the Christian world are greatly to blame. If a brother begin to have his conscience awakened, the first object of the generality is to bring him over to their own particular party. For this end they set before him those particular points which may lead his mind into the particular channel which they wish. But St. Paul expressly forbids such hateful conduct: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but *not to doubtful* disputations[s]." How many hopeful blossoms have come to naught in consequence of their being thus blighted by the breath of vain dispute! How many, instead of coming fully to Christ, and devoting themselves entirely to him, have been led to rest in the adoption of some particular creed, an union with some particular party, or a submission to one particular rite! Verily, they who, by such an use of their influence, keep back an inquiring soul, have much to answer for. To build up a brother in faith and love should be our only object; and, whether he belong to our particular party or not, it should satisfy us to see that he "grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Instead of labouring to proselyte him to our party,

[q] ver. 4. [r] ver. 21. with 1 Cor. viii. 9—13. [s] ver. 1.

party, we should forget that we ourselves are of any party[t]: or, if of a party we must be, let it be of that which Moses approved, and which comprehends the universal Church,—"the Lord's side[u]." To unite each other unto him, and build up each other in his faith and fear, is the only proper exercise of Christian love, and Christian influence.]

[t] 1 Cor. ix. 9—22. [u] Exod. xxxii. 26.

DCCCCXLVII.

SELF-DENYING LOVE INCULCATED.

Rom. xv. 1—3. *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification: for even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me.*

WHILST many scarcely ever dwell upon the atonement of Christ, and on that righteousness which he has wrought out for the redemption of a ruined world, others insist on these, almost to the utter exclusion of all other topics. But the apostle Paul, who certainly was inferior to none in his regard for that fundamental doctrine of the Gospel,—salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus, was yet delighted to exhibit his Divine Master as a pattern and example of universal holiness. In respect to love in particular, he constantly urges us "to love one another, as Christ loved us." In the words before us, he seems almost to go out of his way (if we may so speak) to introduce Christ to our notice in this view. He brings forward, as illustrative of it, a passage of Scripture, in which a person less conversant with the spiritual import of Scripture, or less alive to this important point, would scarcely have found any thing bearing upon his subject. Indeed he almost appears to apologize for this particular quotation, by observing, that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning;" and that, consequently, this prophecy, even though it should not be thought to bear so directly and obviously upon his subject as some others, may properly be adduced in

in illustration of it. But this very circumstance tends so much the more to shew the importance of the subject in the precise view in which he has placed it. Let us consider then,

I. The example here propounded to us—

Two things are said of our blessed Lord,

1. He pleased not himself—

[And how true is this! View him in his incarnation: Was it to please himself that he left "the bosom of the Father," and divested himself of all "the glory that he had with the Father from all eternity?" Was it to please himself, that, "when he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant?" Was it to please himself that he was "made in the likeness of *sinful* flesh," partaking of all our infirmities, and being "made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted?" View him in *his life:* Was it to please himself that till the age of thirty he worked as a common carpenter; and that, from the time he took upon him his Ministerial office, he was subjected to evils and distresses of every kind; being from first to last "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," as his daily and hourly companion? So poor was he, that he had not a place where to lay his head: and so hated, that he was "a sign spoken against," a butt of contradiction to all the people of Israel. There was not any thing he either said or did, that did not subject him to fresh reproaches, and prove an occasion of offence to all around him. Incessantly was he represented as a deceiver, a blasphemer, and a devil, yea, as one who should not be suffered to live. His very first sermon would have been his last, if he had not miraculously withdrawn himself from his persecutors. Was all this undertaken and submitted to, to please himself? View him in *his death.* Was it to please himself that he consented to drink the cup of bitterness which his Father put into his hands; or that he was bathed in a bloody sweat in the garden of Gethsemane; or that he endured the hidings of his Father's face, and expired under all the shame and agonies of crucifixion? No: at no one moment of his life do we find him consulting his own pleasure: his only object, his very meat and drink, was to do the will of Him that sent him.]

2. He submitted to all manner of indignities purely for our sake—

[It had been foretold by David that he should do so. The passage cited by the Apostle undoubtedly refers to Christ. Whatever reference in a subordinate way it had to David, its

its main import is that affixed to it in our text[a]. Every one that was an enemy to God the Father, was an enemy to him: and every shaft directed against the Majesty of heaven, pierced *his* breast. Nor did he withdraw himself from this inconceivably distressing situation, till he had accomplished all that his sufferings were intended to effect. Such was his stupendous love to God, whose glory he sought; and to men, whose souls he had undertaken to redeem! This was the end which he proposed to himself in all: and "this was the joy that was set before him, as his only inducement to endure the cross, and to despise the shame." Consult all the Sacred Records, the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, or the uniform declarations of the New Testament, and the salvation of man will be found to have been the one end of all that he either did or suffered: "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"———]

Let us now proceed to consider,

II. The instruction founded upon it—

This is two-fold:

1. That we also should not please ourselves—

[There is a proneness in men to follow their own inclinations, without considering what may be the effect of their conduct on the minds of others. But in no case whatever should we be guilty of this: it is directly contrary to love, the invariable character of which is, that it "seeketh not her own." We have perhaps a clearer insight into the nature and extent of Christian liberty than others: but shall we therefore use that liberty in a way that may ensnare them, or wound their feelings? No: "the strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves." *The sacrifice must be made on the part of the strong;* and the stronger any profess themselves to be, the more should this self-denial be exercised by them. This is a subject peculiarly worthy the attention of all who "profess godliness." It is much to be lamented, that many carry their zeal for religious liberty to a very undue extent: the mere circumstance of a thing being required by law or custom, is sufficient to make them violent against it: and they would rend the Church into a thousand parties, rather than comply with a prescribed rite or ceremony, even of the most innocent kind. We mean not by this observation to justify the imposing of any thing which is wrong, or that admits of any serious doubt:

[a] Ps. lxix, 9, 20. The other passages connected with these in v. 9 & 21. shew infallibly that the Apostle cites the text in its true, and not in an accommodated, sense.

doubt: but there must be, and there are in every Church under heaven, some rules and orders of human appointment; and, where there is no moral evil in them, they should be observed "for the Lord's sake:" and to be rigid and fierce in our opposition to them, merely because they are established by law, whilst we conform to others that are established only by this or that particular society of Christians, is unreasonable, inconsistent, and highly unbecoming. Such was not the conduct of our blessed Lord, who, though he had no sin to wash away, submitted to John's baptism, notwithstanding it had never been enjoined by the Mosaic law; and wrought a miracle to pay a tax, from which he might have justly pleaded his right of exemption. St. Paul also has in this respect set us a beautiful example, "making himself the servant of all," and "becoming all things to all men, for the Gospel's sake [b]." This was a truly Christian spirit, which we should ever study to imitate; submitting cheerfully to an abridgment of our liberty in matters of indifference, instead of acrimoniously vindicating our rights, and "using our liberty for a cloke of maliciousness.]

2. That we should seek rather the edification of others—

[To "please our neighbour" is an object well worthy our pursuit: for it is by pleasing him that we shall gain the more easy access to him, for the benefit of his soul. Not that we should attempt to please him by any *sinful* compliance; for "if *in that sense* we please men, we cannot be the servants of Jesus Christ." The proper limit to our compliance is here assigned: we must go so far only as will be "for his good to edification." Do we think him too much leaning to the side of needless scrupulosity or superstitious fear? let us not despise his weakness, but act towards him with all imaginable tenderness and forbearance. Do we behold in him a readiness to be offended or grieved at any liberty in which we indulge ourselves? let us cheerfully condescend to his infirmity in a way of conciliation and concession. To "win his soul" should be in our estimation a rich recompence for all the kindness we can manifest, and all the self-denial we can exercise. This was the line of conduct which St. Paul both enjoined to us, and himself practised: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth — — — even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved [c]."

But to recur to the example of our blessed Lord, to which our

[b] 1 Cor. ix. 19—23. [c] 1 Cor. x. 24, 33.

our attention is more especially directed. We see to what an extent he carried these virtues, even to a relinquishment of all the glory of heaven, and to a suffering of all "the pains of hell," for the welfare, not of his friends and brethren, but of his most inveterate enemies: yes, "*even* CHRIST," (whose pleasure the whole universe ought incessantly to consult,) "pleased not himself." Shall *we* then be backward to deny ourselves? *we*, whose only hope is founded on the self-denial that Christ has exercised for us; and who are bound even to "lay down our lives for the brethren?" No: "Let the same mind be in us as was in Christ Jesus; and let us look, not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others[d]."]

The subject thus viewed may well suggest to us the following REFLECTIONS:

1. How extensive and amiable is true religion!

[Religion consists not in notions, nor even in outward actions; but in the habits and dispositions of the mind: it consists in a subjugation of self in all its bearings, and in a conformity of heart to the mind that was in Christ Jesus. And oh! what a world would this be, if true religion universally prevailed! Some have thought that piety thus exercised would excite admiration in all who beheld it: but unhappily we know the contrary: for our blessed Lord exhibited it in its utmost possible perfection; and was the more hated on account of the brightness of his example. But still there is something in this conduct that carries its own evidence along with it; and we cannot but feel, that the more it prevails, the more happiness must be diffused all around us. Only conceive, for a moment, every professor of Christianity "walking precisely as Christ walked," "not pleasing himself" in any thing, but studying in all things to please, and benefit, mankind! Conceive him to be so intent on this blessed work, as readily to bear all manner of reproaches and distresses for the furtherance of it! Could this fail of diffusing happiness wherever he went? Let it then be our endeavour to foster, both in ourselves and others, this heavenly disposition; and "whatever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, let us think of these things," and practise these things[e]; that so all men may "see that we are Christ's, by the Spirit which he has given us."]

2. How little is there of true religion in the world!

[In polished society we behold some semblance of this: the very essence of good breeding is, so to demean ourselves as

[d] Phil. ii. 4, 5. [e] Phil. iv. 8.

as to give no offence to any, but pleasure and satisfaction to all. And it is happy for the world, that, where higher principles are wanting, there is a substitute for piety in the established usages of mankind. But however this substitute may answer many valuable purposes in society, it is of no value in the sight of God, since it is almost always laid aside in the domestic circle, and never exercised from any principle of love to God. In truth, we cannot conceive any thing more contrary to the deportment of the Lord Jesus Christ, than the insincere professions, which pass for politeness among men: so that it is in vain to look for any conformity to Christ *in the world*. Nor shall we find much even in *the Church* itself. There is a deplorable want of a Christian spirit amongst the generality of those who profess the Gospel. Every party, instead of endeavouring by kindness and concessions to conciliate others, is ready to erect a barrier against others, on purpose to prevent that harmony which should subsist amongst all the members of Christ's mystical body. "Brethren, these things ought not so to be:" they are most offensive to God, and most injurious to yourselves: and yet persons who live in the indulgence of these hateful tempers, will call themselves followers of Christ; as if "a fountain could at the same place send forth sweet water and bitter[f]." But woe be to those in whom "this earthly, sensual, devilish, wisdom" is found[g]: they cannot on earth, nor will they in heaven, be found acceptable worshippers before God. Pray then, Brethren, to our common Father, that your souls may be filled with more holy dispositions; and that, "being made like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus, ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ[h]."]

3. How conducive to piety is an intimate acquaintance with the holy Scriptures!

[In reading the holy Scriptures, we should aim particularly at our own spiritual improvement: and, in that view, we should notice with peculiar care the spirit that is inculcated in the precepts, and the disposition that is exercised by the saints of God. If we are not principally attentive to this object, we shall lose more than half the benefit that would result to us from the perusal of them. It is probable, that, in the many hundred times that we may have read the 69th Psalm, we never noticed the very point mentioned by St. Paul, notwithstanding he has taken such care to direct our attention to it! Alas! it is to little purpose to read the Scriptures, if we do not read them with a practical application of them to our own souls. But if we read them in this way, behold, what unspeakable

[f] Jam. iii. 9—12. [g] ib. ver. 14, 15. [h] ver. 5, 6.

unspeakable benefit we may derive from them! Brethren, let not a day pass without treasuring up in your minds some passage that shall lead you into a fuller knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and a more entire conformity to his image. We are told, that "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning[1]:" and we see in the application of the prophecy before us, what valuable instruction is to be drawn from that sacred source. Treat every passage then in this way. Treasure it up in your minds: consider all that it either expresses or implies: and apply it to your souls for your more abundant edification in faith and love. So shall you grow up into Christ as your living Head, and progressively "be changed into his image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."]

[1] ver. 4.

DCCCCXLVIII.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

Rom. xv. 8—12. *Now this I say, that Jesus Christ was a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord all ye Gentiles, and laud him all ye people. And again Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.*

THERE is in man by nature such an inordinate portion of self-love, that his regards are almost exclusively confined to those who coincide with him in sentiment and contribute to his comfort. The smallest difference of opinion in things either political or religious shall be sufficient to produce not only indifference, but in many instances alienation and aversion. We do not much wonder at a want of mutual affection between the Jews and Gentiles, because they imbibed from their very infancy the most inveterate prejudices against each other, and had all their principles and habits as opposite as can be conceived. But, unhappily for the Christian Church, the same disposition to despise or condemn each other

other remained amongst them, after they were incorporated in one body, and united under one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. To counteract this unhallowed temper, and to promote a cordial union amongst all the members of Christ's mystical body, was the incessant labour of St. Paul. In the whole of the preceding context he insists on this subject, recommending mutual forbearance and affection from the example of Christ, who shewed the same regard both to Jews and Gentiles, both to strong and weak[a].

In the words before us we see,

I. The extent of Christ's Church—

The Ministry of our blessed Lord had respect,

1. Primarily, to the Jews—

[Jesus was himself born a Jew; and he submitted to circumcision, which was the initiatory rite whereby the Jews were received into covenant with God. When he entered upon his Ministerial office, he addressed himself exclusively to those of the circumcision: when solicited to confer his blessings on a Syro-phenician woman, he refused; saying, that he was "sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel;" and that "he could not take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs[b]:" though, for the encouragement of all future supplicants, of whatever nation or character, he afterwards granted her request[c]. When he sent forth his Disciples into all the cities, towns, and villages, he expressly forbade them to enter into any city of the Gentiles or Samaritans[d]. Even after his resurrection, he enjoined his Disciples to make the first overtures of mercy to the Jews, notwithstanding they had so recently imbrued their hands in his blood[e]. And though he gave them a commission to carry his Gospel into all the world[f], they still retained their prejudice respecting the exclusive privileges of the Jews: the people who were scattered abroad on the persecution of Stephen went everywhere speaking the word to none but Jews only[g]: and when, after the space of six years, this prejudice was opposed by the miraculous interposition, and incontrovertible attestation, of God himself, the Apostles with difficulty acquiesced, saying, "Then hath God unto the Gentiles also granted repentance unto life[h]." Even St. Paul himself, who from his first conversion was constituted more especially the Minister of the circumcision, laboured first

[a] ver. 1—3, 5—7. with the text. [b] Matt. xv. 23—26.
[c] Matt. xv. 28. [d] Matt. x. 5. [e] Luke xxiv. 47.
[f] Mark xvi. 15. [g] Acts xi. 19. [h] Acts xi. 18.

first to convince the Jews, and turned not to the Gentiles, till the invincible obstinacy of the Jews rendered his further attempts to instruct them altogether hopeless[i].

In all this the Lord Jesus consulted "the truth of God, and confirmed the promises made to the fathers;" which though they comprehended *all* the spiritual seed of Abraham, had doubtless respect to those in the first place who should also be found among his lineal descendants[k].]

2. Ultimately, to the Gentiles also—

[In the very promises made to Abraham, the Gentile nations were expressly included[l]. But, to confirm this truth, St. Paul brings passages out of all the different parts of the Old Testament, "the law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms[m]," to prove his point. It is needless to enter into a minute examination of all the passages adduced, since the authority of an Inspired Apostle is proof sufficient that they all relate to the point in hand. In the first passage, David speaks in the person of the Messiah; and declares, that, in consequence of the subjugation of his enemies, he will promote the Father's glory among all the nations of the world[n]. In the next, Moses exhorts the Gentiles, when made partakers of all the blessings of Redemption, to unite with the Jews in celebrating the event with holy joy[o]. The third passage, which is selected from the Psalms, is of similar import with the foregoing[p]. And the last, which is more express and pertinent than any of the former, is a prophecy that the Gentiles shall trust in and obey Him, who was, as God, "the root;" and, as man, "the offspring," of David and of Jesse[q].

These testimonies unequivocally prove, that, however Jesus, for the accomplishing of the promises, ministered to the circumcision chiefly, yet he did not confine his regards to them, but ordained that all, of whatever nation, should equally be admitted to his covenant, and be made partakers of his salvation.]

The Apostle's main point respecting the extent of the Church being proved, we would call your attention to what he incidently mentions; namely,

II. The duty of all its members—

To whomsoever our Lord communicated his salvation, it was his invariable purpose that they who partook

[i] Acts xiii. 46, 47. [k] Gen. xvii. 1—8.
[l] Rom. iv. 16—18. Gal. iii. 7—9, 28, 29.
[m] Our Lord thus divides the Old Testament, Luke xxiv. 44.
[n] Ps. xviii. 49. [o] Deut. xxxii. 43. [p] Ps. cxvii. 1.
[q] Isai. xi. 10. with Rev. xxii. 16.

took of it should "glorify God for his mercy." The manner in which this is to be done, may be gathered from the passages that are cited. The duty of every member of Christ's Church is,

1. To submit to him—

[Christ is "risen to reign over the Gentiles." Now where there is government, there must be subjection: and consequently all who would belong to Christ must "take his yoke upon them." Their submission too must be willing and unreserved: they must say, like Paul at his conversion, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do[r]?" If we retain in any thing a will contrary to his will, and a practice contrary to his commands, we are rebels and enemies: and if we say respecting him, "I will not have this man to reign over me[s]," he will ere long say respecting us, "Bring hither those that were mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me[t]."]

2. To trust in him—

[Christ comes, not only as a Lord, but as a Saviour; through whom we are to find deliverance from the wrath to come. Now it is said, that "in him shall the Gentiles trust." Our duty towards him is, to believe that he is equal to the task which he has undertaken; that in him there is a fulness of wisdom to instruct the ignorant, or righteousness to justify the guilty, and of grace to sanctify the polluted. We should entertain no conceit of our own sufficiency, nor any doubts of his. We should renounce every kind and degree of self-confidence, and repose all our trust in him alone. Whatever be our character, this is our duty: The learned must look to him for guidance, as much as the most illiterate: the moral must look for acceptance through his righteousness, as much as the most immoral: the strong must depend entirely on his arm, as much as the weakest person in the universe. There is one mode in which all recline upon their bed for the rest of their bodies; and this is the mode which all must adopt in reference to Christ, in order that they may find rest unto their souls[tt].]

3. Rejoice in him—

[To "rejoice in the Lord always[u]" is not merely permitted, as a privilege, but commanded, as a duty. We dishonour him when we do not rejoice in him: we evidently shew that we have a low apprehension of his excellency, and of the benefits which he confers. What they are doing in the Church above,

[r] Acts ix. 6. [s] Luke xix. 14. [t] ib. ver. 27.
[tt] 1 Pet. v. 7. Isai. l. 10. [u] Phil. iv. 4.

above, that we should be doing in the Church below. Our obligations are the same, and so should also our occupations be. Are the glorified saints incessantly admiring and adoring him who is the Author of all their happiness[x]? We also should ever be contemplating the incomprehensible wonders of his love[y], and "rejoicing in him with joy unspeakable and glorified[z]." Let not religion be viewed as a system of restraints, but as a fountain of joys; for "all her ways are ways of pleasantness and peace." The effect of it on all who embraced it in the first ages was, to fill the soul with joy[a]: and such will be its effect on us, if we do not by sin and unbelief provoke the Saviour to hide his face from us.]

4. Walk in his steps—

[This is the particular scope of the text; the intent for which all these quotations are introduced. Our blessed Saviour has shewn a gracious and merciful regard for all the human race: nor has he permitted any diversity in their habits or conduct to exclude them from his kingdom, provided they repent and obey his Gospel. Now our hearts should be enlarged after his example. We should not suffer little circumstantial differences to alienate us from each other. While we claim a right to follow our own judgment, we should cheerfully concede the same liberty to others. A difference of conduct may be proper for different persons, or for the same persons under different circumstances. This is evident from Paul refusing to suffer Titus to receive circumcision; when he had already administered that rite to Timothy: as also from his performing at Jerusalem the vows of a Nazarite, after he had for twenty years renounced the authority of the ceremonial law. It is therefore by no means necessary that we all conform precisely to the same rule in indifferent matters: but it is necessary that we cultivate charity, and maintain "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." If we be not perfectly agreed in sentiment respecting things that are non-essential, we must at least agree in this, to leave every one to the exercise of his own judgment: the weak must not judge the strong, nor the strong despise the weak[b], but all follow after "the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another[c]."]

[x] Rev. iv. 8. & v. 12.
[y] Eph. iii. 18, 19.
[z] 1 Pet. i. 8.
[a] Acts ii. 41, 46. & viii. 8, 39.
[b] Rom. xiv. 3.
[c] Ib. Ver. 19.

DCCCCXLIX.

CHRISTIANS DEBTORS TO THE JEWS.

Rom. xv. 26, 27. *It hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem: it hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.*

AMONGST all the subjects which occupy the minds of men, there is one, which, though it has as great a claim to our attention as any other, is, as it were by the general consent of the Christian world, kept entirely upon the back ground, and is scarcely ever so much as named;—I mean, our obligations to the Jews. Our blessed Lord has said, that "salvation is of the Jews;" and yet notwithstanding we have received salvation from them, we scarcely ever think of making any return to them, or of bringing them to a participation of the blessings which they have transmitted to us. True indeed, in theory, we trace up all the great truths of Christianity to the writings of the Old Testament, where they were primarily revealed and shadowed forth: but beyond the consideration of Judaism as the foundation of Christianity, and of Christianity as the completion of Judaism, we have in general scarcely a thought upon the subject. We hope that no apology will be deemed necessary for bringing to your view a point, which confessedly is of great importance; and which, if regarded, as it ought to be, by those whom I have the honour to address, would soon engage the attention of Christians throughout the land[a].

In the Apostolic age, the converts, whether from amongst Jews or Gentiles, all considered themselves as one great family, of which Christ was the Head. Accordingly, when those of Judea were brought into circumstances of peculiar distress, partly through persecutions, and partly through the famine that prevailed in the days of Claudius Cesar; the Christians of other countries, especially of Macedonia and Achaia, gladly contributed for their

[a] Written with a view to the University; but never preached before them.

their relief. The pleasure with which they exerted themselves in this labour of love, is twice noticed by the Apostle: "It *pleased* them of Macedonia and Achaia; it *pleased* them verily;" that is, they took great delight in this act of kindness. But, whilst the Apostle thus records their benevolence, he acknowledges, that it was no more than the occasion justly demanded: for many of the Jewish Christians had shewn a very ardent zeal in extending to the Gentiles the knowledge of salvation through a crucified Redeemer; and therefore it was but right, that the Gentiles, who had been made partakers of their spiritual things, should impart liberally to their benefactors such a portion of their carnal things as the pressure of the times required: "It pleased them verily; and *their debtors they are.*"

Now this idea, that *the Gentile Christians are debtors to the Jews,* is that which we propose more largely to consider: and in the prosecution of it, we shall state,

I. Our obligations to the Jews;

II. The returns we should make them.

I. Our obligations to the Jews—

To the whole nation of the Jews, from the earliest period of their existence, we are greatly indebted. Let us first notice our obligations to *the Patriarchs.* And here we will begin with *Abraham,* the father of the faithful. With him was made the covenant of grace, that covenant which is at this very moment the one ground of all our hopes. We, especially we Christians, know nothing of uncovenanted mercies. It is in Christ only that we can obtain salvation; in Christ, as our Surety, who has undertaken to discharge our debt, and to make reconciliation for us through the blood of his cross. The covenant of which we speak, was made with Abraham and his seed, particularly with that promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ[aa]: and it is only as children of Abraham that we have any part in it[b]. Here then at once the obligations of the whole Christian world to Abraham are manifest to an unknown extent, inasmuch as every individual among them is indebted to him, for that covenant,

[aa] Gal. iii. 16. [b] Rom. iv. 11, 16. Gal. iii. 7—9, 29.

nant, which is the fountain and foundation of all their hopes.

To Isaac and Jacob also are we very greatly indebted: for they, in conjunction with Abraham, have shewn to us, in a way that has never been surpassed, the nature and operation of saving faith. God promised to Abraham a Seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. According to all human appearances, the accomplishment of that promise was impossible: but Abraham "hoped against hope," and "staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." "Go out from thy house and kindred," says God to him, "and sojourn in a land which I will give thee." He went instantly, in dependence upon God's word, "not knowing whither he went." Go take thy son Isaac, the promised seed whom I have given thee, and offer him up for a burnt-offering on a mount that I will tell thee of." He instantly goes to execute the divine command, not doubting but that God will restore his son to life again, even after he should have been offered on the altar, and reduced to ashes. In like manner Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, sojourned in the land of Canaan, in full expectation, that it should be inherited by their posterity, though as yet they had not a foot of ground in it. They had opportunities enough to return to their own country, if they had chosen it; but they determined rather to be as strangers and pilgrims on the earth all their days; thereby "declaring plainly, that they sought a better country, that is, an heavenly one, and looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God[c]."

Now here we see what faith is: it is such a practical dependence upon the word of God, as leads us to trust in it without doubting, and to obey it without reserve. It is true, we are not required to go forth from our native country, and to live in a foreign land, as they did; but the same mind must be in us as was in them: like them we must consider ourselves altogether "as pilgrims and sojourners" here,

[c] Compare Rom. iv. 19—21. with Heb. xi. 8—10, 13—19.

here, having our hearts fixed entirely on things above, and our lives conformed to the precepts and injunctions of our God. If we had not such bright patterns of holiness before our eyes, we should be ready to think, that lower attainments would suffice; and that some limit might be assigned to the exercise of faith, or to the efforts of obedience: but here we see in men of like passions with ourselves, what a life of faith really is, and what is required of all those who profess themselves the people of the Lord. What an advantage is it to have such patterns before our eyes, and to behold before us the footsteps which will infallibly lead us to everlasting happiness and glory!

From the Patriarchs we will proceed to notice *the Prophets*, and our obligations to them. Of these, the first whom we will mention is *Moses*, that great prophet, like unto whom the Saviour himself was to arise[d]. To him we owe the moral law, even that law which discovers to us the extent of God's requirements, and consequently the depth of our depravity, and the impossibility of ever being saved by any obedience of our own. It is the knowledge of this law that alone can convince the soul of its lost and undone state without Christ; and it is intended by God as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith. Now we all consider ourselves indebted to those who have instructed us in our youth, especially if they have taught us important things which none other was able to communicate. How then are we all indebted to Moses for this infinitely important knowledge, which we never could have derived from any other source, and without which even the gift of God's only dear Son to die for us would never have been effectual for its desired ends! Besides, from this law every Believer is instructed how to please and serve his God. It is a compendium of all that God requires of us: and, if only we follow that in all things, we are as infallibly sure of pleasing God, and of being rewarded by him at the last, as we are sure that there is a God in heaven. Are we not then greatly indebted to the man who has given us this directory?

But

[d] Acts iii. 22.

But there is another law which we have received from Moses, even the ceremonial law; which though, as given to the Jews, it was an insupportable yoke of bondage, yet, as handed down to us, it is scarcely less profitable than the moral law itself. To the Jews it was a dark and shadowy representation of good things to come: those shadows now are all explained by the Gospel; so that, through the light of the Gospel, all the mysterious rites and ceremonies of the law are presented in a clear, definite, and instructive view, as typifying Christ in all his work and offices: and, whilst it thus derives light from the Gospel, it reflects light back again upon the Gospel itself, and renders that incomparably more clear than it would otherwise be. To illustrate this a little:—A drawing that should represent all the constituent parts of a complicated engine, would not be intelligible without a distinct explanation of them: but with the help of the explanation, it would be clear enough. On the other hand, the explanation itself would not be clear, if it had not the drawing to illustrate it. So it is with the law as explained by the Gospel: it does indeed receive in the first instance all its light from the Gospel; but afterwards it presents such an elucidation of Gospel truths, as conveys them with astonishing beauty and force to the mind. Take, for instance, the scape-goat. You are *told* in the Gospel, that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;" and that "all who believe are justified from all things:" but behold the High Priest slaying one goat, and sprinkling its blood upon the mercy-seat within the veil; and then laying both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confessing over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and then sending him away into the wilderness never more to be seen by man[e]: Who that contemplates this, and realizes in his mind the transaction, does not see the actual transfer of his sins to Christ, and the everlasting removal of them from his own soul? I say then, that for the ceremonial, no less than the moral, law, we are greatly indebted to this faithful servant of our God.

Let us turn from him to *the Prophets at large*, comprehending the whole collective body of them: What a chain

[e] Lev. xvi. 15, 21, 22.

chain of prophecy have they given us! what an accumulation of particulars, so as to render it impossible for any one who candidly compares the predictions with the events, to entertain a doubt, but that Jesus is the Christ! And let it be remembered, that they all suffered much at the hands of their fellow-creatures for their fidelity to God: and, at the time that they were delivering their prophecies, they knew that it was not for their own benefit, or the benefit of the existing generation, that they were testifying of these things, but for the instruction and benefit of generations yet unborn, even of us, to whom the Gospel is now fully revealed[f]. Do we owe them no gratitude for these self-denying labours? But, in order to appreciate more justly our obligations to them, let us suppose for a moment, that none of them had recorded the things revealed unto them, and that all their predictions had been forgotten: What would now have been the state of our minds in relation to the Saviour? With what doubts and fears should we have been agitated, and how uncertain should we have been at this hour, whether Christianity were not altogether "a cunningly devised fable!" Do not let us forget, that the assurance which we enjoy respecting the truth of our holy religion, is altogether derived from them: for though the miracles of our Lord were a convincing evidence of his Messiahship to those who saw them, yet to us at this remote period the completion of prophecy is a far surer and firmer ground of confidence: and therefore to those who gave us such a minute and connected series of prophecies we ought to feel the greatest obligations.

There is however one Prophet in particular whose name we cannot possibly pass over in silence;—I mean, the prophet David. He has committed to writing all the secret workings of his heart, under all the diversified conditions into which he was brought, and has given to the Church this invaluable record, that all future saints, into whatever situation they might be brought; might be comforted and edified by his example. Where is there a Child of God in the whole universe that does not account the Psalms of David his richest treasure? Who does

[f] 1 Peter i. 11, 12.

does not read them, and meditate upon them, and find them as marrow and fatness to his soul? Who that has any true religion in his soul, does not find the Psalms the means of his communication with heaven; the ladder, by which he daily, and as it were hourly, ascends to God? Is this no benefit? or is the conferring of it no ground of obligation? Verily the man to whom the name of David is not dear, evinces, that he has no taste for heavenly things, no just discernment of what is truly excellent.

It will of course be expected, that we should not overlook *the Apostles*, those faithful instructors in the whole counsel of God, and those bright examples of all holy obedience. What did not they endure, that they might carry the Gospel to the Gentiles? How did they go throughout all the known world, in labours most abundant, and in deaths oft, "not counting their lives dear unto them, so that they might but fulfil the Ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, and testify the Gospel of the grace of God!" How many millions are now blessing God for them in heaven! How many too are daily adoring God for them on earth, for all the light of their instructions, and all the benefit of their examples! If those who have extended the blessings of civilization, of liberty, and of science, are called Benefactors, what name shall we find whereby to testify our gratitude to the Apostles, for all the light, and peace, and joy, and holiness which through their instrumentality we possess.

We will content ourselves however with this brief mention of them, that we may fix our attention on Him to whom infinitely above all we are indebted,—*the Lord Jesus Christ*. He also was a Jew, "of the seed of David as pertaining to the flesh," though in his divine nature he was "over all, God blessed for ever." Where shall we begin to speak of the obligations which we owe to him? or, having begun, where shall we make an end? He did not merely engage in the covenant of grace as a party, like Abraham, but was the very Mediator and Surety of the covenant, who confirmed and ratified it with his own blood, and undertook, both on the part of God and man,

that

that all the conditions of it should be fulfilled. He did not, like the Prophets, merely utter predictions that should be afterwards accomplished, but actually accomplished in his own person all that had been predicted, and fulfilled every iota of what they had said should come to pass. Nor did he, like the Apostles, merely preach salvation to us, though at the expense of his own life; but he actually wrought out salvation for us, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree; and "becoming a curse for us," that we might be delivered from the curse of the broken law, and the wrath of an offended God. Nay more; after having wrought out an everlasting righteousness for us by his own obedience unto death, he has for nearly 1800 years been incessantly occupied in securing to us the blessings of redemption by the efficacy of his all-prevailing intercession, and by the all-sufficient operations of his grace. He is at this very moment the Head of the whole mystical body, the Church; and is the source of life and strength to all his members. There is not amongst all the saints upon earth one holy desire, one good counsel, or one just thought, which does not proceed from him as its true and proper source: whatever any man possesses, he has received it out of the inexhaustible fulness of Jesus Christ: so that neither on earth nor in heaven is there one who can arrogate any glory to himself: it all belongs to that blessed Saviour, "who liveth in us:" and to all eternity our song must be, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise:" "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and our Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Say now, Brethren, whether, or not, ye are indebted to our ever adorable Emmanuel; and whether, if you neglect to praise him, the very stones will not cry out against you?

We hope by this time that the body of evidence which has been adduced has sufficiently established our obligations to the Jews, and has prepared us with some measure of sincerity to inquire into,

II. The returns we should make to them—

It is something more than mere acknowledgements that

that we are called to make: our duty towards them may be comprised under two particulars:

First, We should *endeavour to secure for ourselves that salvation which the Jews of former ages have handed down to us:* and next, We should *endeavour by all possible means to make the Jews of this and future ages partakers of the same.*

1. We should endeavour to secure for ourselves that salvation which the Jews of former ages have handed down to us. I would ask, Can it be conceived, that we are at liberty to neglect a salvation, which has been purchased for us at so great a price, and has been proclaimed to us in such a variety of ways? Have not all those who in successive ages have laboured for us, a right to expect from us some fruit of their labours? Hear the appeal which God himself makes to us respecting this matter: "O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes[b]?" Here is the very case in point. There is not any thing which we could possibly have desired, either for our conviction or encouragement, which God has not done; yea, he has far exceeded any thing we could have desired, or even thought: And is all this kindness to be requited with neglect? No: the Apostle justly says, "How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him[i]! "If so many things had not been done for us, we had not, comparatively, had sin: but now we have no cloak for our sin:" and all who have sought our welfare, whether Patriarchs, or Prophets, or Apostles, yea and our Lord Jesus Christ himself, will be swift witnesses against us, if we suffer all their labour to be in vain. All that they have done for us, "if it be not unto us a savour of life unto life, will be a savour of death unto death." The first return then which we are bound to make to God, and to all who, as his instruments, have sought our welfare, is, to give up ourselves

[b] Isaiah v. 3, 4. [i] Heb. ii. 3, 4.

ourselves wholly and unfeignedly to the Lord: and it is remarkable that the apostle Paul, expressly referring to the collection made at Corinth on the very occasion mentioned in our text, says, "To their power, (I bear record,) yea and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves, praying us with much intreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints: and this they did, not as we hoped, but *first gave their ownselves to the Lord*[k]." This then must have the precedence of all. Whatever returns we may make either to God or man for the benefits we have received from the Jews, they are all nothing without this: we must "FIRST *give our ownselves to the Lord.*" "I beseech you then, Brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies and souls a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service[l]." I would, in the name of the Most High God, lay claim to every soul here present, and say, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God with your bodies and your spirits, which are his[m]." We call upon you, not to perform a work of supererogation, but to pay a debt: for God's debtors ye are; and this debt must be paid to him at the peril of your souls.

2. In the next place, having secured this salvation for ourselves, we should endeavour to make the Jews of this and future ages, partakers of the same. It may be thought, perhaps, that though we are debtors to the Jews of former ages, we owe nothing to those of this generation. But we would beg leave to state a case, which we apprehend will place this matter in its true point of view. Let us suppose, that a man of vast opulence had disinherited his own children on account of their misconduct towards him, and had bequeathed his whole possessions to us. Let us further suppose, that, after his descendants to the third or fourth generation had suffered all the most lamentable effects of his displeasure, it were in our power to benefit them, without at all injuring ourselves; yea, and perhaps to elevate them to their former rank and happiness, without the smallest diminution of our own property; should we not think that it was our duty to help

[k] 2 Cor. viii. 3—5. [l] Rom. xii. 1. [m] 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

help them? Would not the very consideration of our having, without any merit or service on our part, come to the possession of *their* inheritance, give them some claim upon our compassion; so far at least as to benefit them, if we could do it without any loss to ourselves? Here then is the very case: "They were broken off from their own olive-tree, that we might be graffed in[n]: and it is "of the root and fatness of *their* olive-tree that we are partaking" from day to day[nn]: and, as we may by God's help be instrumental to the "graffing them again upon their own olive-tree," it is our bounden duty to do it, more especially as it is God's avowed purpose, that "they shall be graffed in," as soon as ever they repent them of their former sins, and look with sorrow on the Messiah, whom they have piereed. In this respect we may regard the Jews of this generation as the representatives of those of former ages, and discharge to them the debt which can no otherwise be paid to our original benefactors. If, notwithstanding their present degraded state, they are still "beloved by God for their fathers' sakes," much more should a regard for their fathers cause them to be beloved *by us*.

But if this illustration be not sufficient to convince us, then we will come to an express command of God, which cannot fail to carry conviction to every heart. It will be recollected by all who have paid any attention to the New Testament, that, in the 11th Chapter to the Romans, it is said, that "through the fall of the Jews salvation is come unto the Gentiles[o];"—that "the fall of the Jews is the riches of the world, and the diminishing of the Jews the riches of the Gentiles[p];"—and, finally, that "the casting away of the Jews is the reconciling of the world[q]." But is this blessing which we inherit through them, to be engrossed by us, and no endeavour to be made on our part for their restoration to the Divine favour? No: *it is committed to us as a sacred deposit, to be improved for their good:* (I repeat these words; *It is a sacred deposit, to be improved for their good:*) it is delivered to us, not as proprietors, to use it as we please, but as stewards, to use it for the express purpose that our Lord and Master has enjoined:

[n] Rom. xi. 17—19. [nn] ib. ver. 24. [o] ver. 11.
[p] ver. 12. [q] ver. 15.

enjoined: and this avowed purpose is, that by every means in our power we should bring the poor outcast Jews to the renewed enjoyment of their paternal inheritance: nor should we ever see a Jew without saying in our hearts, There is a man whose inheritance I possess, and to whom I am very deeply in debt. Let us hear the express declaration of God respecting it: "As ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy[r]." Here let it be clearly seen, that the very end for which this mercy is committed unto us is, "that *through our mercy they also may obtain mercy*:" and if we do not improve, for the restoration of God's ancient people, the light and knowledge, the means and privileges, which we enjoy, we are unfaithful stewards. Were we speaking of a steward, who had alienated to his own use the property which we had entrusted to him for the benefit of others, we should find no terms too severe, not even those of thief and robber, whereby to characterize his conduct. We are unwilling to use such terms in reference to the Christian world, who have so long neglected their Jewish Brethren; for we are persuaded, that this neglect has proceeded from ignorance and inattention to the subject, rather than from any wilful dereliction of the trust committed to them: but we must say, that, if the Jews continue to be neglected by us as they have been, we shall contract a fearful responsibility before God.

There is an idea, which is often suggested in order to excuse our supineness, namely, that they are so blind and hardened, that it is in vain to attempt their conversion. But whose fault is it that they are so blind and hardened? Is it not ours? If Christians had universally displayed in their life and conversation the superior excellence of their religion, is there not reason to think, that the Jews might by this time have been led to view it in a more favourable light? Is there not also reason to apprehend, that they have been confirmed in their prejudices against Christianity by the misconduct of its professors? What wonder is it that they are ignorant of Christianity,

[r] ver. 30, 31.

Christianity, when the professors of it now for so many hundred years have made no efforts to enlighten them with respect to it? I say again, The fault is ours. If Christians had universally laboured for their salvation, as their forefathers did for ours, would there have been no converts from among them? Would none of them have been stirred up to make inquiry into the evidences of our religion, and to seek its blessings? But be it so, They are blind and obdurate. And what were we, when in our Gentile state? yea, what should we at this very instant have been, if their fathers had done no more for us, than we have for them? But the same grace that has wrought in us, can work in them; and the same divine power that converted myriads of their forefathers, can work effectually in the hearts of men in the present day: the power that first "commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into the hearts of the very darkest among them; to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

By some it will be said, The time is not come? But who is authorized to say that the time is not come? We have rather reason to hope, that the time is come, or at least is near at hand: for there is confessedly at this present moment a greater zeal among Christians for the conversion of the Gentile world, and for the dissemination of God's word throughout the habitable Globe, than has been at any other period since the Apostolic age: and this gives reason to hope, not only that God is about to do great things among the Gentiles, but that he is about to visit the Jews also: for as, on the one hand, "blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," that is, till the period for the fuller diffusion of divine light among the Gentiles be arrived; so, on the other hand, it is the fulness of the Jews, or the general conversion of them to Christianity, that is to be the riches of the Gentile world; according as it is written, "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the fall of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness[s]?" Here is a fulness of the Jews, as well as a fulness of the Gentiles: and each is to be subservient

[s] Rom. xi. 12, 25.

servient to the completion of the other. In neither case is it to be understood as the completion of the work of divine grace among them; but in both cases it relates to the commencement of that period when the work shall be completed. The diminution of the Jews was progressive; and so we trust will be the bringing in of the complement both of Jews and Gentiles. Indeed so far is it from being true that the whole Gentile world must be converted before the work of conversion shall *begin* among the Jews, that, as appears from the passage just referred to, the Jews in their converted state will be eminently instrumental in converting the Gentile world: and the circumstance of their dispersion through the world, and their knowledge of the languages of the countries where they dwell, peculiarly fits them for communicating to the Gentiles the light of divine truth, the very moment that they themselves receive it. We trust therefore that the very exertions which are now making for the Gentiles, have a favourable aspect on the Jews also. But there is at this time among the Jews themselves, and especially on the Continent, a considerable expectation of their Messiah: nor is it an ill omen, that the Christian world have begun to pay some attention to them, and to use means for their restoration to the Divine favour. We lay not any great stress upon the success of past endeavours; though that is by no means contemptible, considering what difficulties there have been to contend with; but we say, that, whether the time for their full conversion be come, or not, the time for exertion on our part is always come: the time for us to pay our debts is always at hand: and therefore, without presuming to judge of secrets which God has reserved in his own bosom, we call on all to discharge to that benighted people their debt of love.

Is it asked, What shall we do? We feel that we are their debtors; but we know not how to discharge our debts? I answer, What their fathers did for us, that is the thing which we should do for them. St. Paul said, "I am a debtor both to the Jews and to the Greeks:" and how did he discharge his debt? He gave himself up altogether to the work of his Ministry among the Gentiles;

tiles; and counted not his life dear unto him, so that he might but fulfil it to their greatest advantage. He indeed had a particular call to the Ministry, which does not extend to us: but we in our private capacity should be as strenuous for the welfare of our fellow-creatures, as he was in this official character as an Apostle: our modes of manifesting our regard for them will of course differ from his: but as far as our respective situations and characters will admit, we should exert ourselves to make known to them that Saviour, whom they have rejected and despised. It was not every Jew that preached to the Gentiles; nor is it every Christian that is to preach to the Jews: but in conversation with them we may do much good, and in putting into their hands the New Testament, or other useful books; and particularly in earnestly praying to God for them, we may bring down his blessing upon them. Besides, many united together for that end may effect incomparably more than the same number could in their separate and individual state. By encouraging therefore the society that has been formed for the advancement of their welfare, we, though but small contributors ourselves, may be instrumental to the accomplishing of much good amongst them. The translating of the New Testament into pure Biblical Hebrew, and circulating that throughout all the world, is a work which we in particular, as patrons of learning and religion, shall do well to encourage. Were nothing more than the assisting of the Jews under some temporal calamity the object of this discourse, we should feel that we were warranted in calling upon you, not to be liberal, but to be *just*; not to present gifts, but to pay your *debts*, to that much neglected people: for "if we have been made partakers of their spiritual things, our duty is to minister unto them in carnal things." But we stand on far higher ground than the Apostle, and prefer a higher claim. It is the souls of the Jews which we would commend to your care, and their eternal welfare which we would urge you to promote: and in this view all our claims upon you as debtors come with ten-fold weight. Alas! we are greatly and shamefully in arrears; but in proportion to our past neglect should be our future exertions:

tions: and, as we know not how little time may be allotted us for fulfilling our duties to them, "whatever our hand findeth to do, we should do it with our might."

*** *For the sake of those who may wish for a short compendious view of the subject, the following* SKELETON *is annexed.*

ROM. XV. 26, 27.

CHRISTIANITY a religion of love—exemplified on the day of Pentecost, and here—

But this exercise of love was a *debt*:—"their *debtors* they are."

I. Our obligations to the Jews;

II. The return we should make them.

I. Our obligations to the Jews—

These were Christians of a different nation from the Gentiles—

Yet were they debtors to the Jews;—as we also are,

1. To the Patriarchs—

[Abraham—for the covenant of grace—and for a display of faith—
Isaac and Jacob—for illustrating a life of faith—]

2. To the Prophets—

[Moses—for the law { 1. Moral { a Schoolmaster—, a rule—
2. Ceremonial—*Scape-goat*—
Moral—
Ceremonial—which, as a drawing, reflects light—
All the Prophets—for a chain of prophecy—
David—for records of his experience—*Ladder*—]

3. To the Apostles—

[For so full an account of Christ—
For their zeal, in risking life for us—
For their example—of highest virtues—]

4. To the Lord Jesus Christ—

[He did not { obtain the covenant—but ratified it—
foretell—but accomplish—
risk life—but laid it down, and bore our iniquities—
Who can tell the height and depth of his love?]

II. The

II. The return we should make them—

1. Endeavour to secure the salvation which the Jews of former ages have handed down to us—

[It would requite them ill to neglect it—
And would greatly aggravate our guilt—
The Heathen are sinless in comparison—
"How shall we escape if, &c.?" *Heb.* ii. 3.—
Our duty then is,
To trust in Christ—
To follow the counsels and example { of Patriarchs— / of Prophets— / of Apostles—]

2. Endeavour to make the Jews of this and future ages partakers of the blessings which we derive from their fathers—

[If they are beloved of God for the fathers' sake, much more should they be by us; *Rom.* xi. 28.

OBJ.—We owe nothing to them—

ANS.—We do, as the bereaved children of our blessed Benefactor.

QUERY—How are we to do it?

ANS.—As their fathers did for us: Use all active self-denying exertions—

OBJ.—'Tis in vain—they are hardened.

ANS.—Whose fault is that?—Ours—

Had we done for them as their father did for us, would it have been so?

Have we not rather been a stumbling-block?

OBJ.—The time is not come in their way—

ANS.—Who is authorized to say so?

We affirm that it is come—

1. God is awakening an attention to the world—in Bibles—Missions, &c.
2. He has stirred up attention to the Jews—
3. He has excited an expectation of the Messiah, here and on the Continent—*Many gone to Canaan*—
4. He has given success already—

Some pious—and studious, preparing—

Success great, considering the efforts—

Ergo, it is come.

Rom. xi. 25. *misunderstood. See ver.* 12.

But if it were not come, our duty is the same—

Rom. xi. 30, 31. proves us unjust stewards, if we do not—

We

We call you then, not to be generous, but just—Pay your *debts*—

If we called on you for temporal relief only, we should say so—TEXT—

But we stand on higher ground than Paul—

Think what *arrears*, are due—

Let not our importunity, like that of common creditors or claimants, offend—

Let all the means in our power be used—

Do all with holy zeal—"It pleased" *twice*—

But let us, *in the first place*, give up our ownselves to the Lord; 2 *Cor.* viii. 5—

Then may we hope for most success, when we can say, "Come, and I will go also;" *Zech.* viii. 21.]

DCCCCL.

THE GOSPEL A SOURCE OF BLESSINGS.

Rom. xv. 29. *I am sure, that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.*

OF all the Apostles, St. Paul was by far the most abundant in labours. In this chapter he mentions the almost incredible pains he had taken in preaching throughout all that extensive region, "from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, the Gospel of Christ." He was now going to Jerusalem, to carry thither the alms he had collected for the relief of the poor saints in Judea: but as soon as he should have accomplished that object, it was his intention to proceed immediately for Spain, and to visit Rome in his way thither. Of this intention he apprises the Church at Rome. He tells them, in this Epistle, that, though he had not been the means of planting a Church among them, he considered himself "a debtor unto them, as well as unto other Gentiles;" and that "he longed exceedingly to see them, that he might impart to them some spiritual gift for the increase and establishment" of their faith and love[a]; and that "he was sure, that, when he should come to them, he should come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ."

That

[a] Rom. i. 11—15.

That we may understand what it was that he thus taught them to expect, we shall shew,

I. The blessings which the Gospel is intended to impart—

There is a fulness of blessings treasured up for men in Christ Jesus, and communicated to them by the preaching of the Gospel: and, in order to form any just conception of them, we must speak of them, not in the minuteness of detail, but in a large and comprehensive view. We may say of the Gospel then, that it imparts a fulness,

1. Of light and liberty—

[It comes to men whilst they are "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death," and fast bound in the iron yoke of sin. And to them it proclaims "a Saviour, and a great One, who is able and willing to deliver them[b]:" yea, it bids them shake off their chains, and "come forth out of their prison house, and out of darkness[c]." The operation of the Gospel upon the souls of men may be not improperly illustrated by the deliverance of Peter from his prison. There he was lying bound with two chains, and sleeping, though on the very eve of his expected execution. But God sent an angel to deliver him; and suddenly a light shined into the prison; and Peter was awakened from his sleep; and the chains fell off from his hands; and all the gates that seemed to oppose an insurmountable obstacle to his escape, opened to him of their own accord; so that, to the utter surprise of all his friends, he was brought forth at once to light and liberty[d]. We do not mean to say, that the effect of the Gospel is always thus sudden; but, whether the operation be more or less gradual, this is invariably the issue of it, wherever "it comes in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:" the persons wrought upon by it, "have their eyes opened, and are turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God[e]." But there is an expression of St. Peter's that deserves particular attention. He represents men as "called by the Gospel out of darkness into *marvellous* light[f]." And marvellous indeed it is. It is such light as not all other books in the universe can impart;—a light proceeding immediately from "the Sun of Righteouness;"—a light that exhibits every thing in its true colours; sin, in all its malignity; human-nature, in all its corruption; the world, in all its vanity; yea, and God, as a reconciled God, in all his glory:

[b] Isai. xix. 20. [c] Isai. xlii. 7. [d] Acts xii. 6—16.
[e] Acts xxvi. 18. [f] 1 Pet. ii. 9.

glory: "it shines into the heart, and gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "The darkness being passed, and the true light shining into the heart," the soul is "delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God [g]."]

2. Of peace and joy—

[The first effect of the Gospel, or rather, of the law as preparing men for the Gospel, is, to alarm the conscience, and to make men sensible of their just desert: but the moment they embrace the promises of the Gospel, their fears are dissipated, and the whole soul is filled "with peace and joy in believing." This effect cannot be better seen than in the converts on the day of Pentecost. When they assembled in the morning, they were under the influence of every hateful and malignant passion: and, on their first conviction of their guilt, they cried out with great distress of mind, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" But, as soon as they received the Gospel into their hearts, behold, what an astonishing change was wrought! They were all penetrated with love, and peace and joy, "and ate their meat with gladness, blessing and praising God" with one heart and one soul.

What was intimated before respecting the light imparted by the Gospel, may be said also of the peace and joy which it communicates: they are truly "marvellous;" the peace is a peace that passeth all understanding," and the "joy is unspeakable and glorified." The natural man has no conception either of the one or of the other: they are such as never were, nor ever can be, derived from any other source. Some little idea of them may be formed from the exalted language in which they are depicted by the Prophets. The heavens and the earth, even universal nature, are called upon to sing and shout for joy on account of that glorious redemption revealed in the Gospel [h]: and this is but a faint expression of that felicity which is the assured portion of all that believe [i].]

3. Of growth and stability—

[The Gospel does not merely beget souls to God, but fosters and nourishes them to their latest hour; so that they progressively advance, from "babes to young men, and fathers," in the Christian Church. Under its influence they "proceed from strength to strength, till in due time they appear before their God in Zion." Wonderful beyond all conception are the truths which it reveals to their minds; reveals, I mean, as far as they have a capacity to comprehend them. What astonishing views does it exhibit of the fulness, the

[g] Rom. viii. 21. [h] Ps. xcvi. 11—13. Isai. xliv. 23.
[i] Ps. lxxii. 6, 7. Isai. lv. 12. & xxxv. 1, 2, 5, 6, 10.

the excellency, the glory of Christ, and the sufficiency of the work wrought out by him! What discoveries does it give of the Divine perfections, as harmonizing and glorified in the work of Redemption;—of the Divine counsels also, as planning every thing respecting it, and as infallibly accomplished in the salvation of God's elect! What views does it afford them of the Lord Jesus Christ, as having undertaken to justify his people by his blood, to sanctify them by his Spirit, and to "keep them by his own power through faith unto everlasting salvation!" These truths, brought home with power to the soul, tend to "establish, strengthen, settle it;" and to create a holy confidence in "Christ, as the Finisher, no less than the Author, of his people's faith." It is from such deep and enlarged discoveries as these that they are enabled to say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Not that they expect the end without the means: they know that they can never attain "salvation but through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:" they know that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" but they know also that the grace of Christ shall be sufficient for them, and that he will "carry on and perfect in them the good work he has begun," suffering "none to pluck them out of his hands," nor any to bring them into condemnation.]

From this view of the blessings which the Gospel is intended to impart, we pass on to mark,

II. The subserviency of the Ministry to the communication of them—

The Apostle felt assured that he should be an instrument to convey these blessings wherever he should go—

God had originally instituted the Ministry for this very end—

[Under the law, the priests' lips were "to keep knowledge," and to impart it to all who should come to inquire of them: but under the Gospel dispensation, there was an order of men appointed to go forth into all the world, and, by themselves or their successors in the Ministerial office, to "preach the Gospel to every creature." This also was the end for which the Holy Spirit, in his miraculous and gracious influences, was given unto men, even to fit them for the discharge of

of their Ministerial functions; or, in other words, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ[k]."

St. Paul too knew, by his own blessed experience, that the word, as delivered by him, had in many thousand instances produced this effect. Many Churches had been established by him: yea, in no place whatever had he been left to "run in vain or labour in vain;" he was assured therefore, that if ever he should have the happiness of going to Rome, he should see fruits of his labours there, as well as he had done among other nations. The Church of Rome too was already well prepared to receive all his instructions, seeing that already both their faith and their obedience were so eminent as to have attracted the notice and admiration of the whole Christian world[l]. He could have no doubt therefore, but that in such a soil, the seed which he should sow would spring up abundantly.]

The same assurance also every faithful Minister may have—

[God has said, that "if we stand in his counsel, and cause his people to hear his words, we shall be the means of turning them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings[m]." True it is, we are not authorized to expect such success as was vouchsafed to the apostle Paul: but we are assured, that, if "faithful in the discharge of our office," we shall "not run in vain, or labour in vain." God has said, "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and give bread to the eater and seed to the sower, so shall my word be, which goeth forth out of your mouth: it shall not return to me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please; it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." The word is still "the rod of God's strength," the wonder-working rod, which, in whose hand soever it may be, shall alike effect the object for which it is sent, whether to the dividing of the Red Sea, or the bringing forth of water from the flinty rock. Still "it is as fire, or as the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces:" still is it "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds:" "it is sharper than any two-edged sword, and shall pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow." What if we be but babes in the delivery of it? God

[k] Eph. iv. 8, 12, 13.

[l] Rom. i. 8. & xvi. 19. See particularly his high commendation of them, Ch. xv. 14.

[m] Jer. xxiii. 22.

God will "ordain strength in the mouth of babes and sucklings," and will shew, that the Gospel still is, no less than in the Apostolic age, "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

And here we will venture to make our appeal to those who hear us, Whether "the handful of corn which we have cast upon the top of these mountains have not grown up?" and, though we cannot say that "the fruit thereof shakes like the woods of Lebanon," or that converts amongst us "flourish as numerous and as beautiful as the grass of the earth[n]," yet some we have had as "seals to our Ministry;" and, "though poor" in ourselves, we have been the happy instruments of "making some rich;" even richer far, than if we had imparted to them all the wealth of the whole world[o]. We quite mistake, if we suppose that any faithful Minister shall be suffered to labour altogether in vain: the success of some may be small in comparison of that of others: but none shall be left wholly without witness; for our blessed Lord has expressly said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world[p]."]

May we not OBSERVE from hence—

1. What a glorious work is that of the Ministry!

[A pious Minister, who devotes himself wholly to his blessed work, is like a cloud pouring down "showers of blessings" wherever he goes[pp]. God by his exertions "makes manifest the *savour* of the knowledge of Christ in every place[q]," and scatters with a liberal hand "the unsearchable riches of Christ." O blessed work! what employment in the universe can be compared with it? See it described in the passage cited from Isaiah by the Saviour himself[r]: and though that passage primarily relates to him, we may apply it with perfect propriety to all who go forth in his name: and, like him, we may justly say, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears[s]." O that all who bear this sacred character, or look forward to the assumption of it, might have a becoming sense of the dignity of their office, and live only for the profitable discharge of it! and that each in his place and station might be "a tree of life," from which multitudes may gather fruit unto life eternal[t]!]

2. What enemies to themselves are they who will not attend the ordinances of the Gospel!

[If Paul himself should "come hither in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ," what would they be benefited, who

[n] Ps. lxxii. 16. [o] 2 Cor. vi. 10. [p] Matt. xxviii. 20.
[pp] Ezek. xxxiv. 26. [q] 2 Cor. ii. 14. [r] Luke iv. 18, 19.
[s] Luke iv. 21. [t] Prov. xi. 30.

who would not come within the sound of his voice? The pool of Bethesda was endued with all its healing virtues in vain, to those who would not come and wait for the moving of the waters: nor can they be nourished by all the rich provisions of the Gospel, who will not accept the invitation to the feast. O Brethren, do not be making foolish excuses: for God, who knows the state of your hearts, will put the right interpretation on your refusal; and consider your answer, not according to the mere letter of it, "I *cannot* come," but according to the spirit of it, "I *will not* come." To such contemners of God's mercy the Gospel will prove a curse, rather than a blessing: "to those to whom it is not a savour of life unto life, it will be a savour of death unto death: and they who, "like Capernaum, have been lifted up to heaven" by the privileges they have enjoyed, "will be cast down the deeper into hell" for their abuse of them. The Lord grant that *you* may know the day of your visitation, and, whilst ye have the light, may walk in the light, that ye may be the children of light!"]

3. What an awful responsibility attaches to those who hear the Gospel!

[Surely every one of us should inquire, What blessings have I received from the ministration of the word? What know I of this fulness of light and liberty, of peace and joy, of growth and stability, which the Gospel is sent on purpose to communicate? Brethren, has it "come to you as yet in word only, and not in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance?" Unhappy people, if this be the case! Have you never read those words of the Apostle, "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth briers and thorns, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned[a]?" O fearful *curse!* O, "who shall dwell with everlasting *burnings?*" Be persuaded, beloved Brethren, to pray mightily to God for his blessing on the word. It would be to no purpose that even "Paul should plant, or Apollos water, unless God himself give the increase." Look up to God then, to make the word effectual for your good; and, when you are hearing it, pray to him to apply it with power to your hearts. Before you come up to the ordinances, go to the God of ordinances, and intreat of him to visit you with his salvation: and then say with yourselves, 'Now I am going to meet my God, who is coming to "bless me with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus:" Lord, "I am not straitened in thee; let me not be straitened in my own bowels:" come to me "in all the fulness of

[a] Heb. vi. 7. 8.

of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ," and let me this day be "filled with all the fulness of God[x]." To this prayer, in reference to every one of you, we most cordially add, "Amen and Amen."]

DCCCCLI.

PRACTICAL WISDOM RECOMMENDED.

Rom. xvi. 19, 20. *I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*

WHOEVER knows the perverseness of the human mind, must see that it is in vain to hope that any Church under heaven should be long free from the influence of error and contention. What St. Paul said to the Elders of Ephesus, when he parted with them at Miletus, must sooner or later be addressed to all who have been long favoured with the Ministry of the Gospel, that "grievous wolves will enter in among them, not sparing the flock; and that even of their ownselves will men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them[a]." The Church at Rome was as free from this spirit as any in the Apostolic age. Their faith[b], and love[c], and obedience[d], were such as to render them famous through the whole Christian world, insomuch that St. Paul rejoiced greatly on their account[e]: yet he judged it necessary to caution them against "those who wished to cause divisions and offences among them[f]." In prosecution of his purpose he tells them what he wished for in their behalf, namely, that they should be wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

In discoursing on these words, we shall point out—

I. The state of mind we should cultivate—

Nothing is more desirable than to have our minds well regulated in reference to the concerns of religion; since

[a] Acts xx. 29, 30. [b] Rom. i. 8. [c] Rom. xv. 14.
[d] ver. 19. [e] ib. [f] ib. ver. 17.

since by error in judgment, and indiscretion in conduct, we may do incalculable injury to others, and subject ourselves also to many calamities. We should make it our daily study to be,

1. "Wise unto that which is good"—

[It requires no little wisdom to discern in some cases what is good; for good and evil, though totally opposed to each other in matters that are clear and obvious, are sometimes so diversified in their shapes, and so doubtful in their appearances, that they may easily be mistaken for each other. Peter's concern for the welfare of his Master, had the appearance of friendship, whilst in reality it was a preferring of his Master's present welfare to the eternal welfare of the whole world; and in that view was reproved by our Lord as a demoniacal suggestion[g]. There is not any error, either in doctrine or in practice, which may not assume the semblance of truth: and to divest it of all its false colourings, requires much calm and dispassionate investigation.

In addition to the close affinity which there may be between points that are essentially different, and the consequent danger of mistaking their true qualities, there is within ourselves a propensity to lean rather to the side of error by reason of the corruption of our own hearts. There is in our fallen nature a bias towards evil, so that, however fairly we may promise in the outset, we cannot go far without feeling a drawing on one side or other from the straight line of perfect rectitude: either passion or interest is apt to creep in, and to give an undue inclination to our judgment: under their influence we take but a partial view of things, or see them in a distorted shape: in a word, we want "a single eye, which alone can cause the body to be full of light."

But a still further source of error is, that our fellow-creatures are almost universally on the side of error, and, by the countenance which they afford it, render it extremely difficult to be discovered. The spirit of the world is altogether contrary to the Spirit which is of God, so that our minds are blinded by it, and we cannot discern clearly what is of God, and what is not[h]. Besides, "there are many vain-talkers and deceivers[i]," who "lie in wait on purpose to deceive[k]," and who actually do "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple[l]," even so far as to "subvert whole houses[m]." Against such persons it is extremely difficult to guard: and in order to withstand their influence, we need to have from God himself "a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit

[g] Matt. xvi. 22, 23. [h] 1 Cor. ii. 12. [i] Tit. i. 10.
[k] Eph. iv. 14. [l] ver. 18. [m] Tit. i. 11.

a spirit of counsel and of might, a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, and to be made quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord[n]."]

2. "Simple concerning evil"—

[The word "simple" may be understood either as opposed to *a mixture* in our principles, or to *an offensiveness* in our conduct; both of which we should with great diligence avoid.

We *must indulge* then *no evil in ourselves:* we should have no sinister ends in view, no selfish dispositions to gratify, no personal interests to promote: there should be no allowed guile within us: we should guard to the uttermost against any mixture of principle: we should hate sin as sin, irrespective of its consequences; and determine through grace to mortify it, whatever carnal advantages such conduct may deprive us of, or whatever pains it may entail upon us.

We must be careful also to *give no encouragement to evil in others.* In no respect whatever should we encourage sin. We should not only "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but should rather reprove them:" for if we countenance sinners in any of their ways, we "make ourselves partakers of their evil deeds[o]." This is particularly inculcated in the words before our text. We should "mark those who cause divisions and offences, and should avoid them." In another place the Apostle says, we should "withdraw ourselves from them, and have no company with them, that they may be ashamed[p]." In truth, if we would "*mark*" the spirit of such persons, we should soon see how erroneous their ways must be: for they shew by their pride and conceit, their boldness and forwardness, and the constant tendency of their exertions to advance either their own interests or the interests of their party, that "they serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." Thus the uniform endeavour of our lives should be, as our Lord has taught us, to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves[q]."]

That we may the more earnestly cultivate this spirit, let us consider,

II. Our encouragement to live in the exercise of it—

The evils against which we would guard you arise in great measure from the agency of Satan—

[It was Satan who "beguiled Eve" in Paradise: and from that time has he been incessantly occupied in deceiving the

[n] Isai. xi. 2, 3. [o] 2 John, ver. 11. [p] 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14.
[q] Matt. x. 16.

the Children of men. The bad are wholly under his influence: he inspired the four hundred prophets of Baal to deceive Ahab to his ruin[r]: and both Judas and Ananias were actuated by him to perpetrate the crimes which they respectively committed. But even good men are also wrought upon by him on some occasions, as has already appeared in the case of Peter, and as is intimated in the cautions given by St. Paul both to the Corinthian and Thessalonian Churches[s]. Satan can easily assume the appearance of an angel of light, and can enable "his ministers to appear as ministers of righteousness[t]." Hence arises a necessity to be always on our guard against his devices.]

But his influence shall soon be destroyed—

[It was foretold in the very first promise, that the "Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." And this has been fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ, who, even whilst he was yet alive, declared, that, "the prince of this world was judged," and "cast out;" and who "by death overcame him utterly," and whilst yet upon the cross "spoiled all the principalities and powers of darkness." Afterwards, in his resurrection, he completed his triumph over Satan, "leading captivity itself captive." And as he has thus vanquished him *for* us, so will he also overcome him *in* us, enabling us to "resist him till he flees from us," and finally to "bruise him under our feet." Soon shall he cease to harass us. We have but a little time more to conflict with him. The victory is assured to us; and his doom is sealed. The time is near at hand, when all the judgments which he seeks to bring on us shall fall upon his own head; and we whom he now labours to devour shall sit in judgment upon him, and, as assessors with the Lord Jesus Christ, shall declare and comfirm the sentence that shall be executed upon him to all eternity[u].]

And this is a great encouragement to us to maintain the conflict in the way before prescribed—

[Were the contest to be of any long duration, we might be discouraged, just as the Israelites in the wilderness were, at the length of the way[x]. But "it is but a little time, and He who shall come, will come, and will not tarry[y]." Methinks, already has Satan received his death wound, so that we have but to follow up the victory already gained. Already is he, like the five kings of the Amorites when shut up in the cave, doomed to certain death: and soon, like them, shall

[r] 1 Kin. xxii. 19—23.
[s] 2 Cor xi. 3. 2 Thess. iii. 5.
[t] 2 Cor. xi. 13—15.
[u] 1 Cor. vi. 3.
[x] Numb. xxi. 4.
[y] Heb. x. 37.

shall he be brought forth for execution, and the feet of all the Children of Israel be put upon his neck. Yes, he is already a vanquished enemy; and in a little time shall our conflicts be followed with complete success. Like the redeemed Israelites, we shall see all the enemies that affrighted us, dead upon the sea-shore.]

APPLICATION—

Are any of you unconscious of the difficulty of stemming the torrent?

[It only shews that you are carried down with the stream. The generality are "wise to do evil, but to do good have no knowledge[z]:" To become the very reverse of this is no easy matter: and if ever you be brought to a truly Christian state, you shall know the difference between floating with the stream and swimming against it.]

Are any of you discouraged by reason of the difficulties which you have to contend with?

["Encourage yourselves in the Lord your God." Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. He has pledged himself, that "neither angels nor principalities nor powers shall ever separate you from his love;" and "what he hath promised he is able also to perform." Millions who were once as weak as you have already triumphed over Satan and all his hosts, having "overcome him by the blood of the Lamb." That same blood shall prevail for you: and ere long shall you also bear the palm of victory, and sing for ever the triumphs of redeeming love.]

[z] Jer. iv. 22.

DCCCCLII.

THE BLESSINGS IMPARTED BY THE GOSPEL.

1 Cor. i. 4—9. *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

WE cannot but admire the address which is manifest in all the Epistles of St. Paul. He of course has

has frequent occasion to mention truths which are far from palatable to those to whom they are spoken: but he always introduces them in so kind a manner, and accompanies them with such expressions of the most unfeigned love, that it is almost impossible for any to be offended with him. He never shrinks from a faithful discharge of his duty: but he exerts himself always, to the utmost of his power, to heal the wounds which his fidelity inflicts. The Corinthian Church was in a far worse state than any other that he had occasion to address: indeed the manners of the Corinthians, previous to their conversion, were dissolute even to a proverb; and therefore it is the less to be wondered at, that, after their conversion, many of them should still need admonition on points which they had hitherto been accustomed to regard as venial at least, if not altogether indifferent. On every thing necessary for their welfare, the Apostle here communicates his sentiments freely: but in the commencement of his epistle he makes no difference between the Corinthians and the purest of all the Churches. He knew that if many among them were corrupt, the great majority of them were sincere; and therefore he comprehends them all in the first expressions of his regard, that he may afterwards have the more influence over those, whose errors he designed to rectify. And this by the way shews us, that, when we see in our Liturgy the same charitable expressions relative to the state of persons in our own Church, we ought not scrupulously to strain every word to the uttermost, but should allow the same latitude of expression in the one case as we do in the other. But not to dwell on this, we notice in this introductory acknowledgment of the Apostle,

I. The blessings which the Gospel *imparts*—

The Gospel is no other than "a testimony" of Jesus. This was "the spirit of prophecy" under the Old Testament[a]; and it is the spirit of all the writings in the New Testament. What the testimony was,

[a] Rev. xix. 11.

was, is declared with great precision by St. John: "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son: he that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life[b]."

The Believer has this testimony "confirmed in him." There are two ways in which this testimony is confirmed: the one is externally, by signs and miracles; the other is internally, by the operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul. The Corinthians had had it confirmed to them in both ways: for no Church exceeded them in miraculous gifts[c]; and in the change wrought upon their own souls, they had an evidence of the truth and power of the Gospel: they had an evidence of it in "the grace which had been given them by Jesus Christ."

Two things in particular they had received, which served to mark the saving efficacy of the Gospel; namely,

1. An enlightened mind—

[They had been "enriched by Christ with all utterance and all knowledge." Distinct from miraculous gifts, there is in Believers a knowledge of an experimental kind, and an ability also to declare that knowledge with ease and precision. It is a knowledge derived from the heart, rather than from the understanding; even such as Solomon refers to, when he says, "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips[d]." St. John speaks of this when he says, "He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself[e]." There is a perfect correspondence between the divine record concerning Christ, and the feelings of the Believer's soul: he feels that he needs such a salvation as Christ offers, and that there is in Christ a sufficiency for all his wants: and in speaking of these things every Believer throughout the universe is agreed. As in all human Beings, notwithstanding some minute differences, there are the same general features belonging to the body; so in the minds of all Believers there is, notwithstanding a diversity in smaller matters, a correspondence in their general views and sentiments: they all confess themselves to be sinners saved by grace through the Redeemer's blood. Others, who are not true Believers, may have the same creed; but they have not these truths

[b] 1 John v. 11, 12.
[c] 1 Cor. xii. 10.
[d] Prov. xvi. 23.
[e] 1 John v. 10.

truths written in their hearts; nor can they speak of them from their own experience: this is the portion of the true Believer only; and it is a portion, in comparison of which all the knowledge in the universe and all the wealth of the Indies are but dross and dung[f].]

2. A waiting spirit—

[The Corinthians "came behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The saints under the Mosaic dispensation waited for the first advent of our Lord: those under the Christian dispensation wait for his second advent, when he will come again from heaven in power and great glory, to gather together his elect, and to put them into full possession of their destined inheritance. The first Christians thought this period very near at hand: we who live 1700 years after them, believe that it is yet distant; because there are many prophecies not yet fulfilled, which must receive an accomplishment before the arrival of that time. But, as far as respects us individually, the time is near to every one of us, even at the door; for, on the instant of our departure from the body, we are borne into the presence of our Judge, and have our portion for ever fixed. Hence the Believer waits for his dissolution, as the promised commencement of everlasting joys. Others may wait, and even long, for death, as a termination of their sorrows; but it is the Believer alone who "looks for and hastes unto the coming of the day of Christ," as the completion and consummation of all his joys. Others may affect heaven as "*a rest*" *from trouble;* but the Believer alone pants for it as *a rest in God.* In the view of that day, "he is sober, and hopes to the end for the grace that shall be brought unto him at the revelation of Jesus Christ[g]."]

But from our text we are led to notice farther,

II. The blessings which the Gospel *secures*—

God, in calling us to *the knowledge of* his Son, calls us also to *a fellowship with* his Son, in all the blessings both of grace and glory: and where he gives the former of these blessings, there he engages to impart the latter also. On this ground, the promise of a faithful God, the Apostle assured the Corinthians of,

1. Their continued preservation—

["He shall confirm you unto the end," says he. If Believers were left to themselves, they would have no prospect of ever enduring to the end. So many and so great are the difficulties

[f] Phil. iii. 8. [g] 1 Pet. i. 13.

difficulties which they have to contend with, that they could have no hope at all. But God undertakes for them, to "keep them by his own power through faith unto salvation." He engages both for himself and for them: for himself, that "he will not depart from them to do them good;" and for them, that "he will put his fear into their hearts, so that they shall not depart from him[h]." If they offend him by any violation or neglect of duty, "he will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes: but his loving-kindness will he not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail: for once he has sworn by his holiness, that he will not lie unto David[i]." So fully assured of this truth was Paul in relation to the Philippian Church, that he declared himself "confident of this very thing, that He who had begun a good work in them would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ[k]:" and the same confidence we may feel in relation to every true Believer, that "none shall ever separate him from the love of Christ[l]." God pledges his own word, that "he will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able[m]," but that "he will perfect that which concerneth them." When therefore we "pray to God that our whole spirit, soul, and body may be preserved blameless unto his heavenly kingdom," we are authorized to add, "Faithful is he who hath called us; who also will do it[n]."]

2. Their ultimate acceptance—

["He will preserve us, that we may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Blameless" in some respect his people already are, inasmuch as the Lord Jesus Christ has washed them in his blood, and pronounced them "clean[o]." But in the last day we shall be blameless in ourselves, as well as in him; being not only justified, as we now are, by his blood, but sanctified also by his Spirit, and transformed into the perfect image of our God. Then "will Christ present us to himself, without spot. or wrinkle, or any such thing; yea, holy, and without blemish[p]:" and in the meantime "he will, by his almighty and all-sufficient grace, "strengthen, and establish, and settle us even to the end[q]."

Thus does God assure to his people their continued preservation, and their ultimate acceptance with him: and he pledges his own faithfulness for the performance of his word.

But let no man imagine that these truths supersede the necessity of care and watchfulness on our part; for *God will never fulfil his promise to us but through the instrumentality of our exertions.* Hence he requires every exertion on our part, precisely

[h] Jer. xxxii. 40. [i] Ps. lxxxix. 30—35. [k] Phil. i. 6.
[l] Rom. viii. 38, 39. [m] 1 Cor. x. 13. [n] 1 Thess. v. 23, 24.
[o] John xv. 3. [p] Eph. v. 27. [q] 1 Pet. v. 10.

precisely as if he had left the final issue solely dependent on our own efforts; and suspends his promised mercies altogether on the performance of our duties. To obtain his final acceptance of us as blameless, we must *hold fast our faith:* "He will present us holy and unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight, *if we continue in the faith* grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel[r]." We must also *abound in love;* we must "increase and abound in love one towards another, *to the end that he may establish our hearts unblameable in holiness* before God even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints[s]." We must also *use all diligence* in every duty; for it is by diligence that we are to "*make our calling and election sure,*" and that we are to *be* "*found of him* at last in peace, *without spot and blameless*[t]."

Here we see that the very things which God has promised to us, are to be obtained through the medium of our own *faith* and *love* and *diligence.* Without these, the end shall never be obtained; (for God has connected the end with the means:) but through the continued exercise of these, the end is secured beyond a possibility of failure. "God cannot deny himself[u]:" and his word, confirmed as it is by covenant and by oath, can never fail[x]. "Heaven and earth may pass away: but his word shall never pass away[y]."]

APPLICATION—

1. Be thankful if you are partakers of this grace—

[St. Paul "thanked God always on the behalf" of the Corinthians on this account: how much more therefore should those be thankful, who have received the benefit! To possess this experimental knowledge of the Gospel salvation, and to enjoy these blessed prospects of immortality and glory, is the highest felicity of man. Having these "things which accompany salvation," we need not covet any other good, or regret any attendant evil: we have the richest blessings that God himself can bestow.]

2. Be careful to walk worthy of it—

[The mercies of God to us call for a suitable requital: and the requital which he desires is, a total surrender of ourselves to him[z]. The thing which God designs, in the communication of his mercy to us, is, to "keep us blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus." Let that then be our end in the improvement of them, even "to be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and

[r] Col. i. 22, 23. [s] 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13. [t] 2 Pet. i. 10. & iii. 14.
[u] 2 Tim. ii. 13. [x] Heb. vi. 18. [y] Matt. xxiv. 35.
[z] Rom. xii. 1.

and perverse nation, shining among them as lights in a dark world[a]."]

3. Remember in whom all your strength is—

[Of yourselves you can do nothing. It is God, and God alone, that can "confirm you unto the end." He who has been "the Author, must also be the Finisher," of your salvation. It is "He that must work all your works in you:" "all your fresh springs must be in him." Know then, that "he is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy[b]:" and he will do it, if you rely upon him; for St. Paul expressly says, "The Lord is faithful, who will stablish you, and keep you from evil[c]." To him therefore, even "to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and for ever; Amen[d]."]

[a] Phil. ii. 15. [b] Jude, ver. 24.
[c] 2 Thess. iii. 3. [d] Jude, ver. 25.

DCCCCLIII.

THE TRUE LIGHT IN WHICH THE GOSPEL IS TO BE REGARDED.

1 Cor. i. 23, 24. *We preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

THERE is a disposition in man to dictate to God, rather than to receive from him what he is pleased to give—

Though this is not right, nor should Ministers gratify it, yet they should consult men's prejudices, and "seek to please them for their good"—

The Jews and Greeks sought what from their education they had been accustomed to admire—

But St. Paul, notwithstanding his readiness to yield in all things that were less important, was compelled to make the strain of his preaching directly opposite to their corrupt desires—"The Jews require &c.; but we preach &c."

I. The great subject of the Christian Ministry—

The Apostle designates this by "preaching the Gospel,"

Gospel," "preaching the cross," preaching Christ and him crucified"—

But in "preaching Christ crucified" he did not confine himself to an historical relation of the fact, or a pathetic description of it—

To fulfil the true end of the Christian Ministry, we must,

1. Declare the nature of Christ's death—

[This in appearance was only like that of the malefactors that suffered with him—

But it was a true and proper sacrifice to God—

In this light it was characterized by the whole Mosaic ritual[a]—

In this light it was foretold by the Prophets[b]—

In this light it is plainly represented throughout the New Testament[c]—

And unless it be preached *in this view*, we do not, in the Apostle's sense, preach Christ crucified—]

2. Set forth the benefits resulting from it—

[There is not any one spiritual benefit which must not be traced to this source—

Pardon, peace, holiness, glory, are its proper fruits—

Without the atonement we could have received nothing; but by and through it we may receive every thing—

This also must be distinctly inculcated, if we would approve ourselves faithful stewards of the mysteries of Christ.]

3. Persuade men to seek an interest in it—

[We find men filled with self-righteous conceits, and with great difficulty brought to renounce them—

We must therefore argue with them, and urge upon them all the most powerful considerations—

We must address ourselves to their passions as well as their understanding; and gain their affections on the side of truth—

It was *thus* that Paul preached Christ; and it is thus only that Christ crucified can be preached aright—]

II. The manner in which it was, and is still, received—

As there were differences of opinion respecting our Lord himself, some accounting him a good man, and

[a] The sacrifices were types of the atonement.

[b] Isai. liii. 10, 6, 5.

[c] Matt. xxvi. 28. 1 Cor. v. 7. Heb. ix. 26. Eph. v. 2.

and others a deceiver, so are there respecting his Gospel—

1. Some reject it with contemptuous abhorrence—

[Jews and Greeks were equally averse to it, though on different grounds—

The *Jews* did not understand the true nature and scope of their law—

Hence they supposed that the Gospel was opposed to it; and that Christ was an enemy to Moses—

And notwithstanding all the evidence they had of Christ's Messiahship, they rejected him from a pretended want of proof of his divine mission—

The *Greeks* had been habituated to philosophical researches—

And rejected the Gospel because there was nothing in it to flatter the pride of human reason—

Both these kinds of characters yet exist, and oppose the Gospel with equal acrimony—

To some it is "a stumbling-block," as appearing to set aside good works—

To others it is "foolishness," as militating against their preconceived notions of *rational* religion—

And if it be not so dispensed by us as to call forth such treatment from such characters, we have reason to believe that we do not preach the Gospel as Paul preached it—]

2. Others receive it with the deepest reverence—

[There are some "called," not by the outward word only, but by the internal and effectual operations of the Spirit—

These, whatever have been their disposition in times past, have their eyes open to behold the Gospel in a far different light—

To them the doctrine of "Christ crucified" is "*the power of God*"—

They see that it is that, by which God has converted myriads to himself—

They feel also that it is that, to which alone they can ascribe their own conversion—

And they know that nothing can ultimately withstand its power—

To them it is also "*the wisdom of God*"—

They behold in it every perfection of the Deity united and glorified, whilst on any other plan of salvation some of his perfections must be exalted at the expense of others—

They see it also to be suited to the state of every individual in the universe, whilst every other plan of salvation is suited to those only who have been moral, or who have a long time before them to amend their lives—

Above

Above all, they view it as bringing *the greatest good* that ever was vouchsafed, *out of the greatest evil* that ever was committed—

No wonder that they "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of it"—]

ADDRESS,

1. Those who, like *the Greeks*, have a high opinion of their reasoning powers—

[You have just cause to be thankful for strength of intellect—

But the province of Reason is, to submit itself to God—

God has not opened to your reason any one thing *perfectly*, either in creation or providence—

Be not surprised then if you cannot fathom all the mysteries of his revealed will—

Your wisdom is to become as little children—

And if you will not condescend to be taught of Him, he will take you in your own craftiness[d]—]

2. Those who, like *the Jews*, are concerned about the interests of morality—

[Did morality suffer in the life of Paul, or of the first Christians?—

Does it in the lives of many who now profess the Gospel?—

Are they not now condemned as much for the strictness of their lives as for the strangeness of their principles?—

Yea, does not morality suffer through the neglect of this preaching?—

Let not Christ then be a stumbling-block to you, but rather a sanctuary—

If you reject Christ, however good your motive may *appear* to be, your misery will be sure[e]—]

3. Those who embrace, and glory in, a crucified Saviour—

[Contemplate more and more the wisdom and power of God as displayed in this mystery—

And endeavour more and more to adorn this doctrine in your lives—

Let it never become a stumbling-block or foolishness through any misconduct of yours—

Let it be seen by your prudence, that it is true wisdom; and by your piety, that it is the parent of every good work—]

[d] ver. 19, 25. [e] ver. 18. with 2 Cor. iv. 4.

DCCCCLIV.

THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S CALL.

1 Cor. i. 26—29. *Ye see your calling, Brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence.*

IT is manifest to the most superficial observer, that the Gospel, wherever it comes, meets with a very different reception from different people; some accounting it foolishness, whilst others regard it as the wisdom of God and the power of God[a]. That we must trace this to the dispositions of men, is certain; because the guilt of rejecting the Gospel must lie upon the sinner himself: yet, inasmuch as a love of the truth is not attainable by mere human efforts, we must acknowledge God as the true and only source of that difference which appears. If he did not interpose, all would equally despise the Gospel: it is his grace which makes the distinction, and causes some to overcome the corruptions of their nature, and to accept his proffered salvation.

To unravel this mystery, or at least to throw light upon it, we shall shew,

I. Who are the objects of his choice—

God's thoughts and ways are not only far above ours, but often directly contrary to ours.

He has not chosen "the wise, the noble, and the mighty"—

[He has not indeed excluded these; for he invites them all; and no more wills the death of them, than he does the death of any others: but he has not chosen them either *in preference to* the poor, or even *in comparison of* them. Some there have been in every age, who were possessed of much human wisdom, and power, and wealth. God would not pass by them altogether, lest it should appear as if the possession of earthly wisdom and power were an insurmountable obstacle to the reception of the truth; or lest the embracing of his salvation should

[a] ver. 23, 24.

should be thought incompatible with natural abilities, or intellectual attainments. Among the Corinthians there were Crispus and Sosthenes, chief rulers of the Synagogue[b]; and Gaius, a man of wealth and of an enlarged heart; and Erastus, the chamberlain of the city[c]. Some few others were numbered with the disciples: there was Joseph of Arimathea, a rich and honourable counsellor[d]; and Sergius Paulus, a Roman Deputy, famed no less for his wisdom than his power[e]. But if we were to collect the names of all, they would bear no proportion to the numbers of those who composed the Church of Christ. Though therefore there were *some*, there were "*not many*" of this description called.]

The objects of his choice are, the weak, the ignoble, the illiterate—

[As we do not say that these are chosen *exclusively*, so neido we say that they are chosen *universally*; for, alas! there are myriads of poor who are as ignorant and depraved as it is possible for any of the rich to be. But the great majority of the Lord's people are of this description. They have not rank, or learning, or wealth, or great abilities, or any of those things which would recommend them to earthly preferments. This was the case with the first teachers of Christianity: they were, for the most part, poor illiterate fishermen and mechanics. And they who have been their followers have been almost entirely of the middle and lower classes of society. Who are the persons in every town and village who most welcome the preaching of the Gospel? Who are the people that are glad to avail themselves of all the spiritual instruction they can get? Who are they that will be thankful to you for speaking closely to their consciences, and for warning them of their danger? Who are they who will go miles every sabbath to a place where the Gospel is faithfully preached, notwithstanding, when they come thither, they can scarcely be accommodated with a seat whereon to rest? Who are they that love social meetings for reading the word of God and prayer; and that make it their meat and their drink to do the will of God? In short, who are they that prove their effectual "calling," by turning "from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God[f]?" Are these the rich, the great, the learned? or, are they the poor and unlearned? Let observation and experience decide the point. "Ye see your calling, Brethren:" look at it, and judge[ff]: We are not afraid to make our appeal to yourselves; for God himself appeals to you; and thereby makes

[b] Acts xviii. 8, 17. [c] Rom. xvi. 23.
[d] Matt. xxvii. 57. Mark xv. 43. [e] Acts xiii. 7.
[f] Acts xxvi. 18. [ff] It is just as in the days of old: Matt. xi. 5. John vii. 47, 48. Mark xii. 3.

makes you judges in your own cause[g]. We know that these facts give umbrage to many: but however the proud may find in these things an occasion of offence, our blessed Lord saw nothing in them but ground for praise and thanksgiving[h].]

Our subject leads us to notice,

II. The immediate effect of that choice—

We are told that Noah, in building the ark, "condemned the world[i]." A similar effect is produced by the peculiar mercy vouchsafed to the poor. The great and learned, though "they shame the counsel of the poor[j]," yet are ashamed[k] and confounded when they see,

1. Their superior discernment—

[Many of the wise, like the Scribes and Pharisees of old, are conversant with the Holy Scriptures, and extremely well instructed as to *the letter* of them. From hence they suppose that they must necessarily enter into *the spirit* of them, and be as superior to others in a comprehension of Divine truth, as they are in wealth or talents. But when they come to converse with one who has been "*called* out of darkness into God's marvellous light[kk]," they begin to feel their own ignorance, and to wonder at the depth and clearness of the person's knowledge. They cannot conceive how an unlettered person should attain such just and comprehensive views, which they with all their application have not been able to acquire[l]. They do not reflect on what God has told them, that "the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God;" and that the knowledge of them must be obtained by means of a spiritual discernment[m]. They, through the pride of their hearts, presume to bring divine truths to the bar of their own reason; and thus are led to account them foolishness: but the humble disciple of Jesus willingly receives all that God speaks; and to him "every word is both plain and right[n]." But all this is a mystery to those who are "wise after the flesh,"—a mystery which mortifies their pride, and inflames their wrath[o].]

2. Their indifference to the world—

[The men of letters and of wealth, instead of rising above the world, are really its greatest slaves. To enjoy its pleasures, its riches, and its honours, is the summit of their ambition.

[g] Jam. ii. 5.
[h] Matt. xi. 25, 26.
[i] Heb. xi 7.
[j] Ps. xiv. 6.
[k] καταισχύνη.
[kk] 1 Pet. ii. 9.
[l] Prov. xxviii. 11.
[m] 1 Cor. ii. 14.
[n] Prov. viii. 9.
[o] John ix. 34.

bition. They, on the contrary, who are "chosen of God and called[p]," are enabled to renounce the world, and to regard it no more than they would a crucified object, with whom they have no further connection[q]. Now when these persons shew, by their heavenly conversation, that they consider themselves as mere pilgrims and sojourners here, and that "they are looking for a better country, that is, an heavenly[r]," the poor slaves of this world cannot comprehend it. They wonder how any should be so indifferent to the things of time and sense, so bold to encounter the frowns and contempt of all around them, and so immoveable in their adherence to such exploded sentiments and conduct. They know that they themselves could not act in such a manner; and they are unable to account for it in others. But if they understood those words, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith[s]," they would cease to wonder; yea, they would rather wonder that the operations of faith were not yet more uniform and extensive.]

3. Their delight in holy exercises—

[The wise, and mighty, and noble will often perform religious duties with a commendable regularity: but they comply with them rather as the institutions and customs of their country, than as exercises in which they find any pleasure, or from which they expect to derive any present benefit. It is far otherwise with the poor, weak, despised followers of Christ: they engage in these employments with delight: they look forward to the returning seasons of devotion with unfeigned joy: and, though they cannot always maintain a spiritual frame in them, yet there is no other employment so pleasing to them, or so productive of permanent satisfaction. Now this also appears strange and unaccountable to them that are yet in their unconverted state: they cannot conceive how it should be, that persons should multiply their seasons of worship, and put themselves to much expense and trouble in attending on them, without any apparent necessity. They can ascribe it to nothing but enthusiasm or hypocrisy. They are constrained however to confess, that, if religion so abstracts the mind from earthly things, and so inclines us to set our affections on things above, their hopes and prospects are "brought to nought."

Thus as the Gentiles, who *were scarcely regarded as having any existence*, were made use of by God to bring to nought the Jewish polity, in which *all that was valuable was supposed to be contained*[t]; so the spirituality of real Christians is yet daily

[p] Rev. xvii. 14. [q] Gal. vi. 14. [r] Heb. xi. 13—16. [s] 1 John v. 4.

[t] This is the meaning of those expressions, "things which are not;" and "things which are." Compare 2 Esdras vi. 56, 57. and the Apocryphal Esther, Ch. iv. 11. with Rom. iv. 17.

daily made use of by God to bring to nought the pride of wisdom, the power of greatness, and the fond conceits of pharisaic morality.]

But let us examine yet further,

III. Its ultimate design—

God, as it becomes him, consults in all things his own glory. In this dispensation more especially, He has provided, "that no flesh should glory in his presence"—

[It would not become his Majesty to suffer any of his creatures to assume honour to themselves: it is meet and right that all should acknowledge him to be the one source of all their happiness. As he is the Author of their being, they cannot but be indebted to him for all their powers; and as he is the one Restorer of those powers, both by the blood of his Son and the agency of his Spirit, he must have the glory of all which may be wrought by them; none must stand in competition with him; nor must any presume to claim the smallest share of that honour which is due to him alone.]

The dispensation is admirably calculated to insure his end—

[If the wise and noble were called in preference to others, they would infallibly arrogate to themselves, in part at least, the honour of that distinction: they would either think that they had effected the change in themselves by their own power, or that God had had respect to them on account of super-eminent worth. But by the preference given to the poor, all occasion for such boasting is cut off. The rich cannot boast, because they have nothing to boast of. The poor cannot boast, as if God had respected their superior talents; for they feel and know assuredly that they had no such superiority, but directly the reverse. The few rich and wise that are among them cannot boast, because they find that they are few in number, and that the great majority of those who are as wise and great as themselves, have made use of their talents only to harden themselves in infidelity, and to justify their rejection of the Gospel. Hence they are constrained to confess, that it is "God who has made them to differ[u]," and that "by the grace of God they are what they are[x]."]

Many and important are the lessons which we may LEARN from hence—

1. That

[u] 1 Cor. iv. 7. [x] 1 Cor. xv. 10.

1. That God acts sovereignly in the disposal of his gifts—

[We should not hesitate, if any one presumed to direct us in the disposal of our own favours, to put this question to him; "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own[y]?". Yet we are offended if God assert this liberty, and we think ourselves injured if any be chosen by him in preference to us. But how unreasonable and absurd is this! It is unreasonable, because we have no claim upon him for the smallest benefits. Who imagines that the fallen angels have any ground of complaint against him for withholding a Saviour from them, while he provided one for us? Yet they are a superior order of Beings to us, and therefore might have been supposed more worthy of God's attention. What right then can any of us have to murmur, if he be pleased to impart salvation itself to some and not to others, when none possess the smallest title above their brethren? But it is absurd also: for God will not alter his dispensations because we choose to quarrel with them. That he does act in this sovereign manner we cannot doubt: for he dispenses his temporal favours according to his own will; and sends his Gospel to us, while it is withheld from far the greater part of the world: and he tells us no less than three times in the short compass of our text, that he has "*chosen*" some in preference to others. Let us not then dare to "reply against God[z]:" but, while we confess his right to confer his benefits on whomsoever he will[a], let us humbly implore an interest in his favour, and lie as clay in his hands, that he may, for his own glory sake, fashion us as "vessels of honour meet for the Master's use[b]."]

2. That there is not so much inequality in the Divine dispensations as we are apt to imagine—

[It is certainly God who causes some to be born to ease and affluence, whilst others are born to labour and penury. In a time of health there may not be any great difference between them:—but what is there in a time of sickness! The one has all the comforts of medical aid, of numerous attendants, of delicacies suited to his appetite: whereas the other, in a cold and comfortless habitation, is without food, without fuel, without friends, his wife and children as well as himself almost perishing for want, destitute of every thing proper for his disorder, and subsisting only by the scanty pittance hardly obtained, and grudgingly bestowed by an unfeeling dispenser of the public charity. Compare these; and there appears

[y] Matt. xx. 15.
[z] Rom. ix. 20
[a] Rom. ix. 15—18.
[b] ib. ver. 21—23.

appears as wide a difference between them as can well be imagined. But pause a moment: Is this the whole of God's dispensations towards them? Can we find nothing to counterbalance this inequality? Yes: look to the spiritual concerns of these two persons: perhaps, like Dives and Lazarus, the one has his portion in this life, and the other in the next: perhaps God has said to the one, "Enjoy all that the world can bestow;" to the other, "Enjoy my presence, and the light of my countenance:" to the one, "Be rich in learning, wealth, and honour;" to the other, "Be rich in faith and good works:" to the one, "Possess thou kingdoms for a time;" to the other, "Be thou an heir of my kingdom for evermore." Now, though this is not God's invariable mode of dealing with men, (for there are some who are poor in both worlds, and others rich,) yet it accords with the general tenor of his proceedings: it accords also with the text, and therefore is peculiarly proper for our present consideration. Take then the whole of his dispensations together, and it will be found that the spiritual advantages conferred upon the poor are more than an equivalent for any temporal disadvantages they may labour under. Let the rich then not pride themselves on their distinctions[c]; for "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven[d]:" nor let the poor, on the other hand, be dejected on account of their present troubles; for God has chosen them (if they do not despise their birthright) to be partakers of his richest blessings, even life for evermore[e]: but let all, whether rich or poor, seek to have "God himself for the portion of their cup, and for the lot of their inheritance[f]."]

3. That they are the wisest people who covet the best gifts—

[It is generally accounted folly to "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness[g];" but the time will come when it will appear to have been the truest wisdom. Indeed "the fear of the Lord is the very beginning of wisdom[h];" insomuch that all who are not possessed of that, whatever else they may possess, are no better than fools in God's estimation. Let us not then be deceived by the glare and glitter of the world. Let us view things as God himself views them. Let us confess that it is better to be among "the foolish, the weak, the base, the despised, the mere nonentities of this world," and attain eternal happiness at the last; than to be among "the wise, the mighty, and the noble," and to "have our good things in this life only[i]."

We

[c] 1 Tim. vi. 17.
[d] Matt. xix. 23, 24.
[e] See note [g].
[f] Ps. xvi. 5.
[g] Matt. vi. 33.
[h] Ps. cxi. 10.
[i] Luke xvi. 25.

We beg leave however to repeat, that the rich will not be excluded from God's kingdom, if they do not exclude themselves; nor, on the other hand, will the poor be admitted into it, if they do not "strive to enter in at the strait gate[k]." Whatever we be in respect of our wordly conditions, we shall be admitted by the Bridegroom, if we be found among the *wise* virgins[l]: but "the *foolish* shall not stand in his sight; for he hateth all the workers of iniquity[m]."]

[k] Luke xiii. 24. [l] Matt. xxv. 8—10. [m] Ps. v. 5.

DCCCCLV.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED, OR EVANGELICAL RELIGION DESCRIBED.

1 Cor. ii. 2. *I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

IN different ages of the world it has pleased God to reveal himself to men in different ways; sometimes by visions, sometimes by voices, sometimes by suggestions of his Spirit to their minds: but since the completion of the sacred canon, he has principally made use of his written word, explained and enforced by men, whom he has called and qualified to preach his Gospel. And though he has not precluded himself from conveying again the knowledge of his will in any of the former ways, it is through the written word only that we are now authorized to expect his gracious instructions. This, whether read by ourselves or published by his servants, he applies to the heart, and makes effectual for the illumination and salvation of men. It must be confessed, however, that he chiefly uses the Ministry of his servants, whom he has sent as ambassadors to a guilty world. It was thus that he conveyed the knowledge of salvation to the Ethiopian Eunuch, who was reading an interesting portion of Isaiah's prophecies. He might have opened the understanding of this man at once by the agency of his Spirit; but he chose rather to send his servant Philip, to join the chariot, and to explain the Scripture to him. When the Centurion also had sought with much diligence

gence and prayer to know the way of salvation, God did not instruct him by his Word or Spirit, but informed him where to send for instruction; and by a vision removed the scruples of Peter about going to him; that so the established Ministry might be honoured, and the Church might look to their authorized instructors, as the instruments whom God would make use of for their edification and salvation. Thus it is at this time: God is not confined to means; but he condescends to employ the stated Ministry of his word for the diffusion of Divine knowledge: "The priests' lips keep knowledge;" and by their diligent discharge of their Ministry is knowledge transmitted and increased.

But this circumstance, so favourable to all classes of the community, imposes on them a duty of the utmost importance. If there be a well from which we are to receive our daily supplies, it becomes us to ascertain that its waters are salubrious: and, in like manner, if we are to receive instruction from men, who are weak and fallible as ourselves, it becomes us to try their doctrines by the touchstone of the written word; and to receive from them those sentiments only which agree with that unerring standard; or, to use the words of an inspired Apostle, we must "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." To Preachers also there arises an awful responsibility; for, as the people are "to receive the word at their mouth," and their "word is to be a savour of life or of death to all that hear it," it concerns them to be well assured, that they set before their people "the sincere unadulterated milk of the word;" that in no respect they "corrupt the word of God," or "handle it deceitfully; but by manifestation of *the truth* commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God[a]."

Hence it appears that we all are deeply interested in this one question, What is truth? what is that truth, which Ministers are bound to preach, and which their people should be anxious to hear? There will

[a] See 2 Cor. ii. 15—17. & iv. 2.

will however be no difficulty in answering this question, if only we consult the passage before us; wherein St. Paul explicitly declares what was the great scope of *his* Ministry, and the one subject which *he* laboured to unfold. He regarded not the subtleties which had occupied the attention of philosophers; nor did he affect that species of knowledge which was in high repute among men: on the contrary, he studiously avoided all that gratified the pride of human wisdom, and determined to adhere simply to one subject, *the crucifixion of Christ for the sins of men*: "I came not unto you," says he, "with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

To explain and vindicate this determination of the Apostle is our intention in this discourse.

I. To explain it—

By preaching Christ crucified, we are not to understand that he dwelt continually on the *fact* or *history* of the crucifixion; for though he speaks of having "set forth Christ as it were crucified before the eyes" of the Galatians, and may therefore be supposed occasionally to have enlarged upon the sufferings of Christ as the means of exciting gratitude towards him in their hearts, yet we have no reason to think that he contented himself with exhibiting to their view a tragical scene, as though he hoped by *that* to convert their souls: it was the *doctrine* of the crucifixion that he insisted on; and he opened it to them in all its bearings and connexions. This he calls "*the preaching of the cross*:" and it consisted of such a representation of "Christ crucified, as was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to the true Believer, the power of God and the wisdom of God[b]." There were two particular views in which he invariably spoke of the death of Christ; namely, as *the ground of our hopes*, and as *the motive to our obedience*.

In

[b] 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

In the former of these views, the Apostle not only asserts, that the death of Christ was the appointed means of effecting our reconciliation with God, but that it was the only means by which our reconciliation could be effected. He represents all, both Jews and Gentiles, as under sin, and in a state of guilt and condemnation: he states, that, inasmuch as we are all condemned by the law, we can never be justified by the law, but are shut up unto that way of justification which God has provided for us in the Gospel[c]. He asserts, that "God hath set forth his Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins, that he may be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus[d]." He requires all, Jews as well as Gentiles, to believe in Jesus, in order to the obtaining of justification by faith in him[e]: and so jealous is he of every thing that may interfere with this doctrine, or be supposed to serve as a joint ground of our acceptance with God, that he represents the smallest measure of affiance in any thing else as actually making void the faith of Christ, and rendering his death of no avail[f]. Nay more, if he himself, or even an angel from heaven, should ever be found to propose any other ground of hope to sinful man, he denounces a curse against him; and, lest his denunciation should be overlooked, he repeats it with augmented energy; "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed[g]."

To the death of Christ he ascribes every blessing we possess. We are "reconciled to God by the blood of his cross;" we are "brought nigh to him," "have boldness and access with confidence" even to his throne; we "are cleansed by it from all sin;" yea, "by his one offering of himself he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." But there is one passage in particular wherein a multitude of spiritual blessings

[c] Gal. iii. 22, 23. [d] Rom. iii. 25, 26. [e] Gal. ii. 15, 16.
[f] Gal. v. 2—4. [g] ib. i. 8, 9.

blessings are comprised, and all are referred to him as the true source from whom they flow. The passage we speak of, is in the First Chapter to the Ephesians, where, within the space of eleven verses, the same truth is repeated at least eight or nine times. In order to enter fully into the force of that passage, we may conceive of St. Paul as maintaining the truth in opposition to all its most determined adversaries, and as labouring to the uttermost to exalt Christ in the eyes of those who trusted in him: we may conceive of him, I say, as contending thus: "Have we been *chosen* before the foundation of the world? it is *in Christ.* Have we been *predestinated* unto the adoption of children? it is *in* and *by Him.* Are we *accepted?* it is *in the Beloved.* Have we *redemption,* even the forgiveness of sins? it is *in Him, through his blood.* Are all, both in heaven and earth, *gathered together* under one Head? it is *in Christ,* even *in him.* Have we *obtained an inheritance?* it is *in him.* Are we *sealed with the Holy Spirit* of promise? it is *in him.* Are we *blessed with all spiritual blessings?* it is *in Christ Jesus.* When the Apostle has laboured thus to impress our minds with the idea that our whole salvation is in, and by, the Lord Jesus Christ, is it not surprising that any one should be ignorant of it? Yet we apprehend that many persons, who have even studied the Holy Scriptures, and read over this passage a multitude of times, have yet never seen the force of it, or been led by it to just views of Christ as the Fountain "in whom all fulness dwells," and "from whose fulness we must all receive, even grace for grace."

But we have observed, that there is another view in which the Apostle speaks of the death of Christ, namely, as *a motive to our obedience.* Strongly as he enforced the necessity of relying on Christ, and founding our hopes of salvation solely on his obedience unto death, he was no less earnest in promoting the interests of holiness. Whilst he represented the Believers as "dead to the law" and "without law," he still insisted that they were "under the law to Christ,"

Christ," and as much bound to obey every tittle of it as ever [h]: and he enforced obedience to it, in all its branches, and to the utmost possible extent. Moreover, when the doctrines which he had inculcated were in danger of being abused to licentious purposes, he expressed his utter abhorrence of such a procedure [i]; and declared, that "the grace of God, which brought salvation, taught them, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world [k]." A life of holy obedience is represented by him as the great object which Christ aimed to produce in all his people: indeed the very name, *Jesus*, proclaimed, that the object of his coming was "To save his people from their sins." The same was the scope and end of his death, even to "redeem them from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." His resurrection and ascension to heaven had also the same end in view; for "therefore he both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living." Impressed with a sense of these things himself, St. Paul laboured more abundantly than any of the Apostles in his holy vocation: he proceeded with a zeal which nothing could quench, and an ardour which nothing could damp: privations, labours, imprisonments, deaths, were of no account in his eyes; "none of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear unto him, so that he might but finish his course with joy, and fulfil the Ministry that was committed to him." But what was the principle by which he was actuated? He himself tells us, that he was impelled by a sense of obligation to Christ, for all that *He* had done and suffered for him: "*the love of Christ* constraineth us," says he; "because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again [l]." This is that principle

[h] 1 Cor. ix. 21. Gal. ii. 19.
[i] Rom. vi. 1, 15.
[k] Tit. ii. 11, 12.
[l] 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

principle which he desired to be universally embraced, and endeavoured to impress on the minds of all: "We beseech you, Brethren," says he, "by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service[m]." What mercies he refers to, we are at no loss to determine; they are the great mercies vouchsafed to us in the work of Redemption: for so he says in another place; "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are his[n]."

Now this is the subject which the Apostle comprehends under the term "Christ crucified:" it consists of two parts; first, of *affiance in Christ for salvation*, and, next, of *obedience to the law for his sake:* had either part of it been taken alone, his views had been imperfect, and his Ministry without success. Had he neglected to set forth Christ as the only Saviour of the world, he would have betrayed his trust, and led his hearers to build their hopes on a foundation of sand. On the other hand, if he had neglected to inculcate holiness, and to set forth redeeming love as the great incentive to obedience, he would have been justly chargeable with that which has been often falsely imputed to him,—an antinomian spirit; and his doctrines would have merited the odium which has most unjustly been cast upon them. But on neither side did he err: he forgot neither the foundation nor the superstructure: he distinguished properly between them, and kept each in its place: and hence with great propriety adopted the determination in our text.

Having explained his determination, we shall now proceed,

II. To vindicate it—

It was not from an enthusiastic fondness for one particular point, but from the fullest conviction of his mind, that the Apostle adopted this resolution: and so the word in the original imports; "I determined, as the result of my deliberate judgment, to know nothing

[m] Rom. xii. 1. [n] 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified: I have made it, and will ever make it, my theme, my boast, and my song." The reasons why he insisted on this subject so exclusively, and with such delight, shall now be stated:—he did so,

1. Because *it contained all that he was commissioned to declare.*

"It pleased God to reveal his Son in the Apostle, that he might preach HIM among the Heathen:" and accordingly St. Paul tells us, that "this grace was given to him to preach *the unsearchable riches* of Christ." This, I say, was *his* office; and this too is the Ministry of reconciliation which is committed to *Ministers in every age*; "to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them[o]." To the Apostles, indeed, the commission was to "go forth into all the world," and to preach the Gospel to every creature;" whereas to us is assigned, as it were, a more limited *sphere:* but the *subject* of our Ministry is the same with theirs: we have the same dispensation committed unto us; and "woe will be unto us, if we preach not the Gospel."

But, as though men needed not to be evangelized now, the term *evangelical* is used as a term of reproach. We mean not to justify any persons whatsoever in using unnecessary terms of distinction, more especially if it be with a view to depreciate others, and to aggrandize themselves: but still the distinctions which are made in Scripture must be made by us; else for what end has God himself made them? Now it cannot be denied, that the Apostle characterizes the great subject of his Ministry as *the Gospel;* nor can it be denied that he complains of some teachers in the Galatian Church as introducing *another* Gospel, which was not the true Gospel, but a perversion of it[p]. Here then he lays down the distinction between doctrines which are truly Evangelical, and others which have no just title to that name. Of course, wherever the same difference exists between the doctrines maintained, the

[o] 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. [p] Gal. i. 6, 7.

the same terms must be proper to distinguish them; and a just view of those distinctions is necessary, in order to our being guarded against error, and established in the truth.

But we beg to be clearly understood in reference to this matter. It is not our design to enter into any dispute about the use of a *term*, or to vindicate any particular *party*; but merely to state, with all the clearness we can, a subject, about which every one ought to have the most accurate and precise ideas.

We have seen what was the great subject of the Apostle's preaching, and which he emphatically and exclusively called *the Gospel*: and if only we attend to what he has spoken in the text, we shall see what really constitutes Evangelical preaching. *The subject* of it must be "Christ crucified;" that is, Christ must be set forth as the only foundation of a sinner's hope: and Holiness in all its branches must be enforced; but a sense of Christ's love in dying for us must be inculcated, as the main-spring and motive of all our obedience. *The manner* of setting forth this doctrine must also accord with that of the Apostle in the text: the importance of the doctrine must be so felt, as to make us determine never to know any thing else, either for the salvation of our own souls, or for the subject of our public Ministrations. Viewing its transcendent excellency, we must rejoice and glory in it ourselves, and shew forth its fruits in a life of entire devotedness to God: we must call upon our hearers also to rejoice and glory in it, and to display its sanctifying effects in the whole of their life and conversation. Thus to preach, and thus to live, would characterize a person, and his Ministry, as Evangelical, in the eyes of the Apostle: whereas indifference to this doctrine, or a corruption of it, either by a self-righteous or antinomian mixture, would render both the person and his Ministry obnoxious to his censure, according to the degree in which such indifference, or such a mixture, prevailed. We do not mean to say, that there are not different degrees of clearness in the views and Ministry of different

different persons, or that none are accepted of God, or useful in the Church, unless they come up to such a precise standard;—nor do we confine the term Evangelical to those who lean to this or that particular *system*, as some are apt to imagine:—but this we say, that, in proportion as any persons, in their spirit and in their preaching, accord with the example in the text, they are properly denominated *Evangelical;* and that, in proportion as they recede from this pattern, their claim to this title is dubious or void.

Now then we ask, What is there in this which every Minister ought not to preach, and every Christian to feel? Is there any thing in this enthusiastic? any thing Sectarian? any thing uncharitable? any thing worthy of reproach? Is the Apostle's example in the text so absurd, as to make an imitation of him blame-worthy, and a conformity to him contemptible? Or, if a scoffing and ungodly world will make the glorying in the cross of Christ a subject of reproach, ought any who are reproached by them to abandon the Gospel for fear of being called Evangelical? Ought they not rather, like the Apostles, "to rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer shame, *if shame it be*, for Christ's sake?" The fact is indisputable, that the Apostle's commission was to preach Christ crucified;—to preach, I say, *that* chiefly, *that* constantly, *that* exclusively: and therefore he was justified in his determination to "know nothing else:" consequently, to adopt that same resolution is our wisdom also, whether it be in reference to our own salvation, or to the subject of our Ministrations in the Church of God.

We now proceed to a *second* reason for the Apostle's determination. He determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified,—because *it contained all that could conduce to the happiness of man.* There are other things which may amuse; but there is nothing else that can contribute to man's real happiness. Place him in a situation of great distress; let him be bowed down under a sense of sin; let him be oppressed with

with any great calamity; or let him be brought by sickness to the borders of the grave;—there is nothing that will satisfy his mind, but a view of this glorious subject. Tell him of his good works; and he feels a doubt, (a doubt which no human Being can resolve,) what is that precise measure of good works which will insure eternal happiness: tell him of repentance, and of Christ supplying his deficiencies; and he will still be at a loss to ascertain whether he has attained that measure of penitence or of goodness, which is necessary to answer the demands of God. But speak to him of Christ as dying for the sins of men, as "casting out none that come unto him," as "purging us by his blood from all sin," and as clothing us with his own unspotted righteousness; yea, as making his own grace to abound, not only where sin has abounded, but infinitely beyond our most abounding iniquities[q]; set forth to him thus the freeness and sufficiency of the Gospel salvation, and he wants nothing else: he feels that Christ is "a Rock, a sure Foundation;" and on that he builds without fear, assured that "whosoever believeth in Christ shall not be confounded." He hears the Saviour saying, "This is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent;" and having attained that knowledge, he trusts that the word of Christ shall be fulfilled to him: he already exults in the language of the Apostle, "Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us[r]."

But if a sense of guilt afflict some, a want of victory over their in-dwelling corruptions distresses others: and to them also the doctrine of Christ crucified administers the only effectual relief. The consideration of eternal rewards and punishments affords indeed a powerful incentive to exertion; but efforts springing from those motives only, will always savour of constraint; they will never be ingenuous, hearty, affectionate, unreserved. But let a sense of redeeming love

[q] Rom. v. 20, 21. [r] ib. viii. 34.

love occupy the soul, and the heart becomes enlarged," and "the feet are set at liberty to run the way of God's commandments." We say not that every person who *professes* to have experienced the love of Christ, will always walk consistently with that profession; for there were falls and offences not only in the Apostolic age, but even among the Apostles themselves: but this we say, that there is no other principle in the universe so powerful as the love of Christ; that whilst that principle is in action, no commandment will ever be considered as grievous; the yoke of Christ in every thing will be easy, and his burden light; yea, the service of God will be perfect freedom; and the labour of our souls will be to "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." This the Apostle found in his own experience; and this he found to be the effect of his Ministry on the hearts of thousands. What then could he wish for in addition to this? Where this principle was inefficacious, nothing was effectual; and where this was effectual, nothing else was wanted: no wonder then that he determined to insist on this subject, and nothing else; since, whether in the removing of guilt from the conscience, or of corruption from the soul, nothing could bear any comparison with this.

Further, He determined to know nothing but this subject,—because *nothing could be added to it without weakening or destroying its efficacy*. The subject of Christ crucified may, as we have before observed, be considered as consisting of two parts,—a foundation, and a superstructure. Now St. Paul declares, that if any thing whatever be added to that foundation, it will make void the whole Gospel. If any thing could have been found which might safely have been added to it, we might suppose that the rite of circumcision might have claimed that honour, because it was of God's special appointment, and had had so great a stress laid upon it by God himself: but St. Paul says in reference to that rite, that if any person should submit to it with a view to confirm his interest in the Gospel, "Christ should profit him nothing:"

such a person would have "fallen from grace," as much as if he had renounced the Gospel altogether. Again, if any person, who had the foundation rightly laid within him, should build upon it any thing but the pure, the simple, the essential duties of religion, "his work should be burnt up as wood or stubble;" and though he should not entirely lose heaven, he should lose much of his happiness there, and be saved only like one snatched out of the devouring flames. With such a view of the subject, what inducement could the Apostle have to add any thing to it?

But the Apostle speaks yet more strongly respecting this. He tells us, not only that the adulterating of the subject by any base mixture will destroy its efficacy, but that even an artificial statement of the truth will make it of none effect. God is exceedingly jealous of the honour of his Gospel; if it be plainly and simply stated, he will work by it, and make it effectual to the salvation of men; but if it be set forth with all the ornaments of human eloquence, and stated in "the words which man's wisdom teacheth," he will not work by it; because he would have "our faith to stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Hence St. Paul, though eminently qualified to set it forth with all the charms of oratory, purposely laid aside "all excellency of speech or of wisdom in declaring the testimony of God," and "used all plainness of speech," lest by dressing up the truth "in the enticing words of man's wisdom, he should make the cross of Christ of none effect[s]."

Further vindication than this is unnecessary: for, if this subject contained all that he was commissioned to declare; if it contained all that could conduce to the happiness of man; and if nothing could be added to it without weakening or destroying its efficacy; he must have consented to defeat the ends of his Ministry altogether, if he had not adopted and maintained the resolution in the text.

If

[s] 1 Cor. i. 17. & ii. 1, 4, 5.

If then these things be so, we may venture to found upon them the following advice.

First, *Let us take care that we know Christ crucified.*—Many, because they are born and educated in a Christian land, are ready to take for granted that they are instructed in this glorious subject: but there is almost as much ignorance of it prevailing amongst Christians as amongst the Heathen themselves. The name of Christ indeed is known, and he is complimented by us with the name of Saviour; but the nature of his office, the extent of his work, and the excellency of his salvation, are known to few. Let not this be considered as a rash assertion: for we will appeal to the consciences of all; Do we find that the Apostle's views of Christ are common? Do we find many so filled with admiring and adoring thoughts of this mystery, as to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of it; and to say, like him, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ?" On the contrary, do we not find that there is an almost universal jealousy on the subject of the Gospel; that those who most labour to tread in the Apostle's steps, are often most branded with opprobrious names? Do we not find that his views of the Gospel are calumniated now, precisely as they were in the days of the Apostle himself? Verily, we should be glad to be found false witnesses in relation to these things; and would most joyfully retract our assertions, if it could be shewn that they are not founded in truth. We do hope however that there is an increasing love to the Gospel pervading the whole land; and I pray God it may prevail more and more, and be embraced by every one of us, not superficially, partially, theoretically, but clearly, fully, practically.

Secondly, *Let us adopt the Apostle's determination for ourselves.*—Doubtless, *as men* and *members of society*, there are many other things which we are concerned to know. Whatever be our office in life, we ought to be well acquainted with it, in order that we may perform its duties to the advantage of ourselves

selves and others; and we would most particularly be understood to say, that the time that is destined for the acquisition of useful knowledge, ought to be diligently and conscientiously employed. But, *as Christians*, we have one object of pursuit, which deserves all our care and all our labour: yes, we may all with great propriety determine to know nothing but Christ and him crucified. This is the subject which even "the angels in heaven are ever desiring to look into," and which we may investigate for our whole lives, and yet leave depths and heights unfathomed and unknown. St. Paul, after preaching Christ for twenty years, did not conceive himself yet awhile to have attained all that he might, and therefore still desired to know Christ more and more, "in the power of his resurrection, and in the fellowship of his sufferings." This therefore *we* may well desire, and count all things but loss in comparison of it.

Lastly, *Let us make manifest the wisdom of our determination by the holiness of our lives.*—The doctrine of Christ crucified ever did, and ever will appear "foolishness" in the eyes of ungodly men; so that, if it be preached by an Apostle himself, he shall be accounted by them a babbler and deceiver. But there is one way of displaying its excellency open to us, a way in which we may effectually "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men;" namely, "by well-doing;" that is, by shewing the sanctifying and transforming efficacy of this doctrine. St. Paul tells us, that "by the cross of Christ the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world [t]:" and such is the effect that it should produce on us: we should shew that we are men of another world, and men too of "a more excellent spirit:" we should shew the fruits of our faith in every relation of life: and, in so doing, we may hope to "win by our good conversation" many, who would never have submitted to the preached word.

But we must never forget where our strength is, or on whose aid we must entirely rely. The Prophet Isaiah

[t] Gal. vi. 14.

Isaiah reminds us of this; "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength:" and our Lord himself plainly tells us, that "without him we can do nothing." Since then "we have no sufficiency in ourselves to help ourselves," and God has "laid help for us upon One that is mighty," let us "live by faith on the Son of God," "receiving daily out of his fulness that grace" that shall be "sufficient for us." Let us bear in mind, that this is a very principal part of the knowledge of Christ crucified: for, as "all our fresh springs are in Christ," so must we look continually to him for "the supplies of his Spirit," and "have him for our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and redemption."

DCCCCLVI.

THE FEELINGS OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER.

1 Cor. ii. 3. *I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.*

THERE was one subject on which St. Paul delighted chiefly to expatiate, which was, "Christ crucified;" a subject which to the Jews was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. The mode on which he insisted upon it, contributed to render it yet more distasteful to the philosophic reasoners of Greece and Rome: he laid aside all needless parade of wisdom, and all adventitious ornaments of rhetoric, and plainly declared the fact, that Christ was crucified for the sins of men. This he did, not because he was not able to express himself agreeably to the taste of men of learning, but because he was anxious "that the faith" of all who received the Gospel "should stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" accompanying a simple statement of the truth. It is probable, too, that somewhat in his speech and external form contributed to render him base and contemptible in the eyes of many[a]. In addition to all this, the hostility

[a] 2 Cor. x. 1, 10. Gal. iv. 13.

hostility of his enemies was most bitter, so that they sought by all possible means to destroy him. These diversified trials he sustained for the most part with great fortitude: but it seems that at Corinth his courage was in some degree shaken; for our blessed Lord, in order to comfort and encourage him, appeared to him in a vision, and bade him not be afraid, for that he would suffer none in that place to hurt him[b]. To this state of mind he most probably alludes in the words before us, declaring, that, partly by his "fightings without and fears within," he had been "among them in weakness, and fear, and much trembling." But we must not confine the words to this sense: there can be no doubt but that he had many other sources of inward trial, such as are common to all who execute the Ministerial office. What these are, and what corresponding feelings they call for amongst a believing people, it is our present intention to inquire.

We will shew,

I. The feelings experienced by a faithful Minister—

However light many think of the Ministerial office, it is a situation of great difficulty, insomuch that there is not any truly faithful Minister who does not find the expressions in our text exactly descriptive of his own feelings.

To the frame of mind here spoken of, he will of necessity be led,

1. From a view of the vast importance of his work—

[A Minister is an Ambassador from the Court of Heaven, empowered to declare to men the terms on which a reconciliation may be effected between God and them, and on which they who are now objects of God's righteous indignation may become monuments of his love and favour. A man who has the fate of an empire depending on him, sustains an arduous office: but all the empires upon earth are not of equal value with one soul. What a weight then has he upon him, who undertakes to negociate a treaty between God and man,—a treaty, on the acceptance or rejection of which the everlasting

[b] Acts xviii. 9, 10.

ing salvation of hundreds, and perhaps of thousands, depends! Methinks this were an office for an angel, rather than for a poor worm like ourselves: yet is it devolved on us: and every one who is able to estimate its importance, and desires to execute it with success, must needs execute it "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."]

2. From a sense of his own insufficiency to perform it—

[In one who would perform this office aright, there ought to be a combination of all that is good and great. There need not indeed be the same *kind* of knowledge, or the same *species* of talent as would be necessary for a person entrusted with the *political* interests of men: but there should be a deep insight into the great mystery of Redemption; a comprehensive view of it, as founded in the necessities of our fallen nature, and adapted to all our wants. There should be an ability to bring forth out of the inexhaustible stores that are contained in the Sacred Volume, whatever is best fitted for the establishment of sound doctrine and the refutation of error, as also for the correction of every thing that is wrong in practice, and the promotion of universal righteousness[c]: he should be "a scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of God," and able to meet every case with suitable instruction. He should also be endued with such grace, as to exemplify in his own spirit and conduct all that he teaches to others; being "an example to Believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity[d]." But, as St. Paul himself says, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Who that has any consciousness of his own ignorance and sinfulness, does not tremble at the idea of his own utter inadequacy to the work assigned him?"]

3. From a consideration of his own awful responsibility—

[We are constituted Watchmen to the House of Israel; and are warned beforehand; that if any soul shall perish through our neglect, his "blood shall be required at our hand[e]:" and on this account we are told to "watch for souls, as those who must give account[f]." But who can reflect on this, and not tremble? It is an awful thought, that we must every one of us answer for ourselves: but how much more, that we must give an account of the hundreds and thousands that are committed to our charge! Verily, if there were not a God of *infinite* mercy to pity our weakness and to pardon our defects, I know not who would dare to undertake the office.

[c] 2 Tim. iii. 16. [d] 1 Tim. iv. 12. [e] Ezek. xxxiii. 6—8.
[f] Heb. xiii. 17.

office. Whenever we hear the bell announcing the death or funeral of one that was under our care, we are constrained to ask, What was the state of that soul? Did I do all that I could for him whilst he was alive? Can I say as before God, that "I am pure from his blood?" Ah, Brethren! this is sometimes a heavy load upon the mind; for, of all the people upon the face of the earth, the man who most stands in need of superabounding grace and mercy, is he who has the care of souls committed to him: and the Minister that does not tremble at this thought, has, above all men in the world, the most need to tremble.]

4. From an apprehension lest his labour should after all be in vain—

[The labours of Jesus himself, and of all his Apostles, were, with respect to the great mass of their hearers, in vain: no wonder, therefore, that it is so with respect to us. And what a distressing thought is this, that we eventually increase the guilt and condemnation of vast multitudes, over whom we have wept, and for whose salvation we have laboured! The word which we preach to them, if it be not "a savour of life unto life, becomes to them a savour of death unto death[g]." If we had not laboured among them, "they would not, comparatively, have had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin[h]:" the more they are, like Capernaum, exalted in their privileges, the more deeply will they be cast down into hell for their abuse of them[i]. Who that has a spark of compassion in his soul, can look around him on the multitudes who have hitherto withstood his efforts for their good, and not weep over them? Who, when he reflects, that, with respect to many, his commission will prove only like that delegated to Isaiah, "Go, and make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed[k];" who, I say, can reflect on this, and not be "in weakness, and fear, and much trembling;" more especially when he considers how much the failure may have been owing to his own deficiencies?

Such then are, and ought to be, the feelings of all who have learned to estimate aright the difficulties and dangers of the Ministerial office.]

Corresponding with these are,

II. The feelings called for in a believing people—

These, it is true, are not expressly mentioned in our

[g] 2 Cor. ii. 16. [h] John xv. 22. [i] Matt. xi. 22—24.
[k] Isai. vi. 9, 10.

our text; but they are so closely connected with the foregoing subject, that we must on no account omit to notice them.

Two things are evidently called for on the part of those who are blessed with such a Minister:

1. A reciprocal concern for his welfare—

[Whilst he is thus "travailing, as it were, in birth with them," they should be deeply concerned for him, and study by all possible means to strengthen his hands and to comfort his heart. They should co-operate with him in every labour of love; they should, as far as their influence extends, endeavour to confirm his word, and to advance his work. In their own families especially they should be labourers together with him. Above all, they should assist him daily with their prayers. How often does the Apostle say, "Brethren, pray for us[l]!" yea, with what extreme earnestness did he intreat this succour from the Church at Rome; "I beseech you, Brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me[m]!" To this he confidently looked, as to an infallible source of blessings to his own soul[n], and of success to his Ministerial exertions[o]! This therefore is the duty of every one, in return for those efforts which his Minister is using for his good. Intercession is an ordinance of God; and is replete with benefit invariably to those who use it, and most generally to those in whose behalf it is used. Does your Minister then stand in need of wisdom, of zeal, of patience, of love, of all manner of gracious communications? be instant in prayer for him, that he may receive from the fulness that is in Christ all seasonable and necessary supplies. Without such co-operation on your part he can scarcely hope to bear up under the pressure of the load that is laid upon him. He is ready at times to complain, as Moses did under the weight that had been devolved on him: "Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burthen of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me[p]." Learn then, Brethren, to sympathize with him; and "labour fervently and without ceasing in prayer to God for

[l] 1 Thess. v. 25. Heb. xiii. 18. [m] Rom. xv. 30.
[n] Phil. i. 19. [o] 2 Cor. i. 11. Eph. vi. 18, 19.
[p] Numb. xi. 11, 12, 14.

for him, that he may be enabled to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God[q]."]

2. An anxious desire to answer the end of his exertions—

[Is a Minister thus deeply exercised for his people's good, and should not they be anxious for their own? Is he harassed with unremitting solicitude, and should they be sitting in a state of indifference? Know, Brethren, that the very circumstance of God's having set apart an order of men to labour for your souls, is a very abundant proof that your souls are of an inestimable value, and that all the anxiety you can feel is less than they call for at your hands. Do but consider, that every moment you are ripening either for heaven or for hell; every action, every word, and every thought, is enhancing either your happiness or misery for ever. More particularly are you responsible for all the means of grace which you enjoy, and for all the efforts which are used for your salvation. Should not this thought fill you with fear and trembling, more especially when you look back upon the opportunities which you have neglected to improve? Have you no reason to fear, lest he who seeks your eternal welfare, and longs above all things to have you as his "joy and crown of rejoicing in the last day," should, after all, be a swift witness against you to your everlasting confusion? Begin then, if you have not yet begun, to cherish this salutary fear. Remember, what his object is; and then inquire, whether that object have been attained in you. It is not to an approbation of his Ministry, or to a mere profession of the truth, that he wishes to convert you, but to a cordial acceptance of the Gospel salvation, and an entire surrender of your souls to God. Less than this will not answer the ends of his Ministry, or bring any substantial blessing on your own souls. I pray you, examine well how far this good work has been wrought within you; and learn to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." We do not mean that you should be kept in a state of *slavish* fear; for the very scope and intent of the Gospel is to "cast out all such fear as hath torment." It is a *filial* fear that we recommend to you; and it is a *filial* fear that we would cultivate ourselves: but the more that abounds in Ministers and people, the more will the work of God flourish among them, and God himself be glorified in the midst of them.]

[q] Col. iv. 12.

DCCCCLVII.

THE GOSPEL A STUPENDOUS MYSTERY.

1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. *It is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him: but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.*

THE former part of this passage is generally quoted as relating to the eternal world. But, if the latter part be taken in connexion with it, as it ought to be, the sense is evidently determined to those things which were revealed by the Spirit to the Apostles of Christ. And it is in this sense that the words were originally used in the place from whence they are cited. They are part of a prayer, which the Jews, as soon as they shall begin to embrace the Gospel, will pour out before God in behalf of their afflicted nation; intreating him to interpose in their behalf, as powerfully as he formerly did when he brought them out of the land of Egypt; and to make known to them those great and glorious truths of which hitherto they have never had any just conception[a]. To the same purpose the Apostle cites them in our text. He is speaking of the Gospel as "foolishness" indeed to the natural man, but as in reality the most stupendous display of the Divine wisdom; such as had never before been seen, or heard, or thought of, from the foundation of the world[b]; and such as, if previously known to those who crucified our Lord, would have effectually deterred them from executing in that respect the eternal counsels of the Deity.

Confining then our views of the passage to what is revealed in the Gospel, we will shew,

I. How infinitely superior the Gospel is to any thing that reason ever devised—

Reason has certainly evinced great powers in relation to things natural and temporal—

[It

[a] Isai lxiv. 4. The prayer begins at Isai. lxiii. 15. and continues to the end of the 64th Chapter.

[b] ver. 6—8.

[It has penetrated far into the regions of science. It has comprehended within its grasp the whole extent of that field which was laid open to the mind of Solomon; and has arranged according to their nature and properties all parts of the animal and vegetable creation, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall, together with all the different orders of beasts, and fowl, and fishes of the sea[c]." Nay, it has soared beyond this terraqueous globe, even to the starry heavens; and has found out the magnitude and distances and courses of the heavenly bodies, together with the laws by which they move, in their respective orbits. It has in these and many other respects carried its researches far beyond the limits which nature appeared to have assigned to it, and has raised man far higher in the scale of creation than by his contracted powers he seemed destined to stand.]

But it has made little progress in relation to things spiritual and eternal—

[Man with all his powers was not able to find out God. Not even the unity of the Godhead was discovered by him; much less were his great and glorious perfections. The wisest philosophers spake on these subjects with much uncertainty and inconsistency. As for any way of reconciliation with God consistently with the Divine perfections, not so much as a thought of it ever entered into the mind of man, till it was revealed to man by the Spirit of God: it was far out of the reach of human reason to declare, how God should be just, and yet the justifier of sinful men. Even a future state of existence was rather guessed at than fully ascertained; and the nature of that state was wholly unknown:—so true is it, in reference to the whole circle of Divine knowledge, that "man by wisdom knew not God[d]."

Thus, when we compare the knowledge which we enjoy under the Gospel with the discoveries of uninspired men, we are constrained to say, that they are as wide asunder as light is from darkness, and heaven from hell.]

But, to form a correct estimate of the Gospel, we should see,

II. How far superior it is to any thing that men had a conception of under the Jewish dispensation—

God did reveal himself to Moses: but his views of God were very partial and indistinct: he saw only, as we are told, "his back parts[e]." As far as he, and David, and Isaiah had a clearer insight into the great mystery

[c] 1 Kin. iv. 33. [d] 1 Cor. i. 21. [e] Exod. xxxiii. 23.

mystery of Redemption than others, they received it rather by special inspiration, than from the notices given of it in the Mosaic law: the Jews as a people had very indistinct notions on the whole subject of religion.

1. Their views of God himself were very dark—

[To them he appeared rather as a Sovereign than as a Father; and as a Sovereign of their own nation only, and not the Father of the whole human race. They beheld him rather in the terrific aspect of his Majesty, than in the endearing attribute of mercy.]

2. They knew but little of the way of acceptance with him—

[They had sacrifices, it is true, but such as could give no peace to a wounded conscience. The very necessity of repeating the same sacrifices from year to year, clearly shewed to them, that their past sins were not fully expiated or blotted out. The sacrifices, in this view, were rather "remembrances of sin," than real expiations of it. For some sins, as murder and adultery, no sacrifice whatever was appointed: and for these therefore there was no well-grounded hope of pardon. All that they were assured of, in any case, was, rather an exemption from punishment by the Civil Magistrate, than an everlasting remission of their sins by God himself: so dark, even in this respect, was the dispensation under which they lived.]

3. The real blessedness of his people could not be duly estimated by them—

[They possessed indeed many privileges above the Heathen; but yet they were kept at an awful distance from God. The people at large could not enter into the court of the more privileged orders, the Priests and Levites: nor could any but the High Priest alone enter into the most holy place; and he only on one day in the year, and in the way that was particularly prescribed. Their services consisted altogether in burthensome rites and ceremonies, which, instead of calling forth a sublime exercise of spiritual devotion, were "a yoke which none of them were able to bear." They went in and out before God as servants actuated by fear, and not as children under the influence of love.]

4. Not even the future state of rewards and punishments was clearly known to them—

[Some light indeed was thrown upon the eternal world; but it was faint and glimmering. Little was seen throughout the

the Mosaic writings but a prospect of temporal rewards and punishments, of an enjoyment of Canaan with much earthly felicity, or of an ejection from it with the attendant miseries of captivity and bondage.

Thus the whole of the Jewish state was at best only as an intermediate state between the darkness of Heathenism and the light of the Gospel: it was as the early dawn to usher in the brighter day.]

To elucidate the infinite superiority of the Gospel, we must proceed to shew,

III. How full and rich a manifestation of it we enjoy—

"The darkness is now passed, and the true light now shineth [f];"—

1. God himself is now fully revealed to us—

[We see not only his unity, but his subsistence in Three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; all in glory equal, and in majesty co-eternal. All his perfections also have been made, as it were, to shine both in their separate, and united, splendor before our eyes;—justice harmonizing with mercy, and righteousness combining with truth, in the salvation of fallen man: yea, justice glorified in the way of mercy, and mercy in the way of justice, and truth and righteousness in all. Yes verily, "the whole glory of the Godhead now shines before us in the face of Jesus Christ [g]."]

2. The mysterious plan of Redemption also is now fully opened—

[We are introduced, if we may so speak, to the eternal counsels of the Deity, wherein the Father gave to his Son a people to be redeemed, and the Son undertook to lay down his life for them. In the fulness of time we behold the eternal Son of God laying aside that glory which he had with the Father before the worlds were made; and taking upon him our nature, on purpose that in the nature which had sinned he might suffer the curse that was due to sin. We behold him fulfilling the perfect law of God for us, that we may have his perfect righteousness imputed to us, and at the same time expiating our guilt by his own sufferings on the cross. We see him further rising from the dead, and ascending up to heaven, to carry on there the work he had begun on earth; to be the continual Intercessor for his people, and, as their living Head, to supply them with all that their necessities require. And, finally, we behold him coming again to judge the world, and to assign to his friends, and to his enemies, the portion prepared for them; and then, having completed the whole work of

[f] 2 John, ver. 8. [g] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

of Redemption to the uttermost, "surrendering up the kingdom into the Father's hands, that God may be all in all."

How amazing is all this! how infinitely beyond all that human eye ever saw, or ear heard, or heart conceived!]

3. The felicity of God's people is now also plainly declared—

["Perfect peace" is now to be enjoyed by all who believe in Christ. No doubt rests upon the mind respecting the fulness and sufficiency of his atonement: it is known to be a sufficient "propitiation for the sins of the whole world." Now every Believer has free access into the holiest of all, to behold God himself upon his mercy-seat, and to present before him his sacrifices of prayer and praise. Every saint now regards God as his Father, and with a filial confidence goes in and out before him, assured that every thing both in heaven and earth shall be ordered with an immediate view to his good, as much as if there were not another creature in the universe. And lastly, he looks up to the more immediate residence of Jehovah, assured that a crown and a kingdom are prepared for him, even a participation of the Redeemer's glory, and an everlasting fruition of God himself.

Say, Did ever any child of man, even among the Jews, foresee such things as these? Did even the highest archangel ever form any adequate conception of them, before they were revealed to the Christian Church? No: they were hid from angels, as well as men[h]; and the angels are made wiser by the revelation of them to the Church[i]. But to *us* they are now revealed: they are revealed *to* us in the written word; and they are revealed *in* us by the mighty power of the Spirit taking the veil from our hearts, and giving to us a spiritual discernment[k]: and we are authorized to declare, that the most ignorant of true Believers at this day is greater than all the Prophets, not excepting the Baptist himself, who personally knew Christ, and pointed him out as "the Lamb of God who should take away the sins of the world[l]."]

IMPROVEMENT—

1. How inexcusable are they who inquire not into these things!

[Has God in his infinite mercy revealed such things to us, and shall we pay no attention to them? Shall we treat them as if they were no other than "a cunningly-devised fable?" Shall "the angels in heaven be desiring to look

[h] This is particularly marked in the passage as it stands in Isaiah; "None, O God, *besides* thee." Isai. lxiv. 4.

[i] Eph. iii. 9, 10. [k] 1 Cor. ii. 12, 14. [l] Matt. xi. 11.

look into them[m]," and we be unconcerned about them? Oh, Brethren, what account shall we give of ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, if, when he says to us, "Search the Scriptures, for they testify of me," we prefer every other book before them, and either neglect the Bible altogether, or read it only as a formal exercise? Surely our "study should be in it day and night," and it should be "sweeter to us than honey, or the honey-comb."

2. How blind must we be, if we see no glory in them!

[What! see nothing wonderful in an incarnate God! Nothing wonderful in God dying in the place of his own rebellious creatures! Nothing wonderful in our being brought by these means into union and communion with God, and an everlasting participation of his glory in the world to come! If these things be not wonderful, tell me any thing that is. You would be filled with utter astonishment, if a fellow-creature were to tell you some of the phenomena of nature; and are you not when God tells you all the wonders of his grace? If these things produce no admiring and adoring thoughts in your hearts, know assuredly that the God of this world hath blinded your eyes, and that "you are in darkness even until now." Were you of the happy number of the Lord's people, it would have "been given you to behold the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven:" but "if you see them not, it is because ye are not of God."]

3. How ungrateful are they who do not endeavour to walk worthy of them!

[These things are revealed, not as matters of speculation, but as means of happiness, and as incentives to holiness of life. Do but think what manner of persons ye ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness; *ye*, I say, for whom such things have been done, and to whom they have been revealed! But it will be well for you to attend to that expression in our text, that "God hath prepared these things for *them that love him.*" True, in the first instance it is for his enemies: but they do not remain his enemies; on the contrary, they "love him," and serve him, and "wait for him[n]:" and verily, if, after you have been enlightened by the Spirit of God, and been enabled to behold all these wonders of love and mercy, you do not devote yourselves wholly to the Lord, you shew that you have no part or lot in this matter. You may have believed, like Simon Magus; but like

[m] 1 Pet. i. 12.

[n] Compare the passage as it stands in Isaiah, with the same as cited by Paul.

like Simon Magus you shall perish: for know assuredly, that, "if ye be Christ's, ye will crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, and will glorify God with your body and your spirit, which are his."]

*** If this be the subject of *a Mission Sermon*, the duty of diffusing over the face of the whole earth these glorious truths may here be pressed to great advantage.

DCCCCLVIII.

THE NATURAL MAN'S IGNORANCE OF DIVINE THINGS.

1 Cor. ii. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

CHRISTIANITY, as far as relates to its provisions, is founded in the necessities of man: there is a perfect correspondence between the want and the supply: whichever of the two is contemplated, we of necessity behold, or at least may behold, the other. Men, it is true, are not very willing to acknowledge their necessities; and hence they think lightly of the blessings of the Gospel salvation: and many, who are willing to confess the depravation of their will and their affections through the fall of our first parents, are very averse to admit the loss they have sustained in their intellectual powers. But it is certain, that the mind of man is no longer what it was before the introduction of sin into the world: it can no longer discern the glory and excellency of Jehovah, or the mysteries of his spiritual kingdom. This is expressly declared in the words before us; which it is our intention,

I. To explain—

That we may have a just view of them, we will distinctly shew,

1. Whom we are to understand by "the natural man"—

[The term which we translate "natural," is differently translated in different places; and the sense must always be

determined by the context. Now the whole context shews, that the person here spoken of is man in his natural state, untaught, and unassisted by the Spirit of God. From the middle of the preceding chapter, two descriptions of persons are mentioned; one, wise in respect of earthly knowledge, but spiritually blind, and, in consequence of that blindness, pouring contempt upon the Gospel: the other, as spiritually enlightened, and, in consequence of that illumination, accounting the Gospel the richest display of God's wisdom and power. The former the Apostle denominates the "wise, the scribe, the disputer of this world," and comprehends among them "the princes of this world:" these, in our text, he calls "the natural man," that is, man conversant with worldly knowledge, but uninstructed by the Spirit of God.]

2. What are those things which he can neither receive nor know—

[These are "the things of the Spirit," or, the great mysteries which are revealed to us in the Gospel. And when it is said, that the natural man cannot know them, we are not to understand merely that these mysteries are not discoverable by the light of reason, so as to supersede the necessity of any revelation; but that, however revealed to us externally by God, they cannot be inwardly comprehended, without a special discovery of them to the soul by the influence of the Holy Spirit. As far as they are capable of being judged of by reason, or are mere matters of science, any man may, by the application of his own natural powers, understand them: but, as far as they are objects of faith, and matters of experience, no man can understand them, unless he be taught of God. Theoretically, he may maintain the whole system of the fall and the recovery; but, practically, he cannot realize in his soul the truths which he maintains: the humiliation which his depravity calls for, he cannot feel; nor the gratitude, which the wonders of redemption so imperiously demand. On the contrary, the whole system, however *as a theory* it may be approved, *as a practical and influential principle in the soul* is accounted "foolishness."]

3. Whence this incapacity arises—

[It is well accounted for in the words before us: "He cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned." We are not to understand by this, that the spiritual man is endued with any new faculty, which the natural man does not possess; for then the natural man would be rather to be pitied for a defect which was unavoidable, than to be blamed for a weakness to which he himself was accessary: we are rather to understand, that the natural man does not make a right

right use of the faculties which he already possesses, but, through the corruption of his own heart, renders them unfit for the use for which they were originally designed. Perhaps we may attain some insight into this matter by means of an easy and familiar illustration. Many by nature are very indistinct in their organs of vision; and art has enabled them to supply the defect. From the formation and structure of their eye, the objects which they beheld do not fall upon the retina that should reflect them, but either fall short of it, or go beyond it: but, by interposing a proper medium, the object is brought to such a focus as the eye requires; and is then clearly discerned. Now we may suppose our natural pride, and unbelief, and sensuality, to have rendered our spiritual discernment so indistinct, that nothing is seen aright; but objects, especially spiritual objects, are dim and distorted: but humility, and contrition, and faith being given by God as a new medium through which they shall be seen, the objects are made, so to speak, to fall upon the heart, and are discerned by the heart in all their true colours and dimensions. We do not propose this as a *perfect* illustration; for nothing in nature will perfectly represent the mysteries of grace: but it may serve perhaps to convey some faint idea of our natural incapacity to know and to receive the things of the Spirit; and may shew us what we want in order to a spiritual discernment. It is the Spirit of God alone that can supply us with those qualities of mind which will rectify the defects of our visual organs: but when he does supply them, then, in proportion as they are communicated, will be the clearness of our sight. We again say, that we do not bring this as a *perfect* illustration, and much less as *a proof*, of the truth we are considering: but we apprehend, that it is such an illustration as the word of God sanctions. Our blessed Lord tells us, that, "if our eye be evil, the body will be dark; but that, if our eye be single, our whole body will be full of light:" and St. Paul says, that "by reason of use our senses are exercised to discern both good and evil[a];" by which two passages we learn, that the rectification of our visual organs, and the due application of them to their proper objects, are the appointed means of communicating to us a spiritual discernment.]

This truth, we now proceed,

II. To confirm—

The natural man, under all circumstances, is blind to the things of God—

It was so in our Lord's Day—

[Never

[a] Heb. v. 14.

[Never was there any light comparable to that which was diffused by the Sun of Righteousness: yet the darkness comprehended it not. Our Lord came to his own, and his own received him not[b]. The very people who, from their acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, and their opportunities of knowing the character of our blessed Lord, and the proofs of his Divine mission, had the best means of ascertaining the truth of his Messiahship, could see "no beauty or comeliness in him for which he was to be desired[c]. The great mass of the Jewish people accounted him an impostor: and when his own disciple, Peter, confessed him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, our Lord said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven[d]." Whence it is evident, that none can truly receive Christ in all his characters and offices, unless a spiritual discernment be given unto them by the Spirit of God. Clear as our Lord's discourses were, they were not understood fully even by the disciples themselves. "To them indeed it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" more clearly than to others; but even they could not enter fully into the nature of his kingdom, no, not after he had risen from the dead, till "he opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures[e]."]

It was so under the Ministry of the Apostles—

[Paul himself, so far from being convinced by the wonders of the day of Pentecost, was the most determined enemy of the Christian Church, till Christ himself arrested him in his mad career, and revealed himself to him by an immediate vision, and a special revelation from heaven. In like manner the Ministry of Paul was as offensive to some, as it was delightful and instructive to others. Those "whose hearts the Lord opened," as he did Lydia's, "to attend to the things spoken by Paul," received the word with all gladness; but the great majority of his hearers rejected it with abhorrence. The very same words spoken before Festus and Agrippa, made one to cry out, "Paul, thou art beside thyself:" and the other to say, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."]

And thus it is also at this day—

[The work of conversion does not go forward among "the wise, the mighty, the noble:" on the contrary, the Gospel is very generally esteemed as "foolishness" among them. We still find occasion for the same acknowledgement as our Lord himself made: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the

[b] John i. 5, 10, 11.
[c] Isai. liii. 2.
[d] Matt. xvi. 17.
[e] Luke xxiv. 45.

the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight[f]." To this source we must trace all the difference that we still observe amongst the hearers of the Gospel: "The Spirit of God worketh all in all; and divideth to every man severally as he will[g]." If we know Christ, it is because "he hath given us an understanding that we might know him[h]," and "an unction of the Holy One," whereby our faculties were enabled to apprehend him[i]: and, if we have come to Christ, it is because "we have heard and learned of the Father[k]."]

Humiliating, no doubt, this Declaration is: nevertheless it is one which we shall do well,

III. To improve—

We may learn from it,

1. How to appreciate Divine knowledge—

[Valuable as human knowledge is, it bears no comparison with that which is Divine. So superior is "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord," that St. Paul accounted all things but as dross "and dung in comparison of it." It is more excellent in its nature, more exalted in its origin, and more beneficial in its use. Into the mystery of redemption the very "angels themselves desire to look." To understand it, we must be taught, not of man, but of God; and, when we have received it aright, it will renew and sanctify us after the Divine image. Let it then be sought by us, not exclusively indeed, but supremely. Let us not be satisfied with any knowledge which the natural man can attain: but let us seek that which shall carry its own evidence along with it as Divine, by its renewing, sanctifying, and comforting influence upon the soul.]

2. How to seek it—

[Nothing is to be attained without diligence: but it is not by study only that the knowledge of Divine things is to be acquired: we must "cry after knowledge," at the same time that we "search for it as for hid treasures." It is "the Lord alone who giveth wisdom;" and therefore we must seek it from him by earnest prayer. We must beg him "to give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him," that the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we may see "the deep things of God." He first "commanded light to shine out of darkness" in the material world; and a similar process must take place in our minds through the operation of his Word and Spirit. We must be "taught of

[f] Matt. xi. 25, 26. [g] 1 Cor. xii. 6, 11. [h] 1 John v. 20.
[i] 1 John ii. 20, 27. [k] John vi. 45.

of God, as all his children are:" and then only shall we behold "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, when he shines into our hearts to give it us[1]." Our studies therefore must all be accompanied with prayer; and we must never take up the Holy Scriptures without crying, like David, "Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."]

3. How to employ it—

[Has God in his unbounded mercy opened our eyes, and enabled us to see what the natural man is not able to receive? Surely we should endeavour to employ that light in the way that shall most conduce to his glory. We should make use of it as the means of searching out his glorious perfections, and of discovering the heights and depths of his unsearchable love. We should also employ it for the rectifying of all our own views, and spirit, and conduct; and, finally, for the diffusing, to the utmost of our power, the knowledge of him throughout the world. As it was said to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy Brethren;" so is it said to us, "Freely ye have received, freely give." No one gift is bestowed on us for ourselves alone, but for the good of others: and knowledge in particular is a talent entrusted to us for the benefit of all around us: "it is a light that is to be set on a candlestick, and not to be hid under a bushel." If then, through the distinguishing grace of God, we have been called to the knowledge of the truth, it becomes us to "shine as lights in the world," and so to "hold forth the word of life," that others may be "guided into the way of peace."]

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

DCCCCLIX.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THOSE WHO BUILD UPON THE TRUE FOUNDATION.

1 Cor. iii. 12—15. *Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire: and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a Reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved: yet so as by fire.*

IN our natural state, we follow the dictates of our own will, without consulting the honour of our God. Even after we are converted to God, there yet remains

remains within us a proneness to follow our own inclinations, except as Divine grace counteracts that propensity, and prevails against it. In the Corinthian Church there were many awful proofs of this fact. The irregularities which obtained amongst them, were both numerous and deeply reprehensible. A party-spirit in particular created very grievous dissentions among them. St. Paul reproving their unbecoming conduct, reminds both the preachers who fomented such divisions, and the people who were drawn aside by them, that their eternal happiness would be advanced or diminished in proportion as they cultivated or neglected a Christian temper; and that, if they would be approved of their God in the day of judgment, they must not only build on the right foundation, but raise upon it a superstructure that should be worthy of it.

To elucidate the words before us, we shall shew,

I. What is that superstructure which we ought to raise upon the true foundation—

Among the persons who rely on Christ as their only hope, there is a great diversity both of sentiment and action. This is intimated by the different images under which their conduct is represented in the text.

There are some whose actions may be compared to "wood, and hay, and stubble"—

[There were in the Apostolic age two sets of teachers, who occasioned much strife and dissention in the different churches; namely, those who contended for the observance of the Mosaic Ritual, and those who introduced into Religion the dogmas of Philosophy ——— Persons of similar dispositions and sentiments have infested the Church in every age. Some are distracting the minds of those around them with subtle questions and unedifying disputes about doctrines; whilst others are magnifying the external forms of Church-government, as if they were of equal importance with the most fundamental articles of our faith ——— How justly the superstructure which these men raise, may be compared to "wood, and hay, and stubble," appears from the natural tendency, and universal effect, of their exertions: for, instead of edifying the Church in faith and love, their doctrines uniformly lead to error—to contention—to bondage—Hence it

is

is that St. Paul studiously guarded all Ministers from engaging in such unprofitable disputes, and all Christians from being led astray by them[a] ———]

But those actions which we ought to be performing, may rather be compared to "gold, and silver, and precious stones"—

[As the Apostles themselves were, so have many in all succeeding ages been, intent on cultivating, both in themselves and others, all the graces of the Spirit. It has been their ambition, whilst they have founded all their hopes on Christ, to shew, by the holiness of their lives, that the Gospel is indeed "a doctrine according to godliness" ——— Now such a superstructure does indeed resemble the materials here mentioned; for it is valuable in itself—suitable to the foundation—ornamental to the edifice—and worthy of the Divine Inhabitant— Such is the superstructure which we all should raise: and it is the orderly accumulation of such materials as these, which assimilates the Church to that Temple wherein God visibly resided[b], or rather, to that more glorious Temple wherein he dwells invisible to mortal eyes[c].]

That we may be stimulated to care and diligence in these things, let us consider,

II. The importance of erecting such an edifice as will be approved of by God—

This is set forth by the Apostle in very awful and appropriate terms:

1. Our works will all be tried as by fire—

[In that day when God shall judge the world, "he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the most secret counsels of our hearts." As the Judaizing teachers of old, or the philosophical Reasoners, conceived that they were actuated solely by a regard for truth, while they were in reality instigated by pride and bigotry; so the contentious disputers about doubtful points of doctrine, or indifferent matters in Church-government, little think "what spirit they are of." But, as fire tries the metals, and discovers the dross that is in them; so will that fiery trial discover the unworthy mixtures with which our most specious actions were debased. It is to no purpose therefore to deceive ourselves; for we shall most assuredly be undeceived in

[a] He bids us beware of the subtilties of Philosophy, on the one hand; Col. ii. 8. 1 Tim. iv. 7. & vi. 20. 2 Tim. ii. 16. 23. and of the bigotry of superstition, on the other; 1 Tim. i. 3, 4. Tit. iii. 9.
[b] 1 Chron. xxix. 2, 7, 8. [c] Rev. xxi. 18, 19.

in that solemn day, when "the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is."]

2. The works that are approved will add to our eternal happiness—

[Every grace which we exercise, is pleasing and acceptable to God. "A meek and quiet spirit," and consequently every other holy disposition, "is in the sight of God an ornament of great price."—It is the *mind*, which God regards. A contrite sigh, a grateful aspiration, an adoring look, are of more value in his eyes than all the zeal or subtilty which ingenious disputants or pharisaic bigots can exercise. Nor shall a pious thought or desire pass unnoticed or unrewarded.]

3. The works which are disapproved will detract from our felicity—

[It is supposed that we unfeignedly build upon the right foundation; and that this will secure our acceptance with God. But the degree of our happiness will depend entirely on the superstructure which we raise. We may suffer loss *in* heaven, even though we should not suffer the loss *of* heaven. Known deliberate sins will rob us of heaven itself: and mistaken services, so far from increasing our reward, will diminish it. The person who has "added grace to grace with holy zeal and diligence, will have an entrance ministered unto him *abundantly* into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour[d]." On the other hand, they whose spirit is less agreeable to the mind of God, will be saved only "as brands plucked out of the burning." Wherein the precise difference will consist, we do not know. It is sufficient that we are informed it does exist, and will certainly be manifest at the last day. Some "will suffer loss," and others "receive a full reward." Surely this consideration may well make us careful to regulate our minds by the sacred oracles, and to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing."]

ADDRESS—

1. Let us look well to our foundation—

[It is obvious that, if they who build on the right foundation may yet be "*scarcely* saved," they who are not fixed on that, cannot be saved *at all*. Let us remember then that Christ is the only foundation of our hopes, and that we must depend solely on the merit of his blood and righteousness[e]. Every other hope must be renounced; and we must say with the Church of old, "In the Lord alone have I righteousness and strength."]

2. Let us look well to our superstructure—

[The caution in the text clearly proves, that persons, upright

[d] 2 Pet. i. 5—11. [e] ver. 11. with Isai. xxviii. 16.

right in the main, are yet liable to err, and to be heaping up rubbish for the fire while they fancy that they are doing God service. Let us therefore take heed to our ways, and "take heed to our spirit." Let us not only endeavour to live and act for God, but to do every thing from such *motives*, and in such a *manner*, as shall be approved by him in the day of judgment.]

DCCCCLX.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIVILEGES.

1 Cor. iii. 21—23. *Let no man glory in men: for all things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's: and Christ is God's.*

IT is scarcely to be expected, considering the weakness and depravity of our fallen nature, that the Church in any place should be free from dissentions and disputes. If every man who embraced the Gospel were from thenceforth altogether under its influence, nothing but love and harmony would prevail. But, not to mention the insincerity of some, who, like Simon Magus, profess the truth without experiencing any of its sanctifying influence, the hearts of men are not changed all at once, but by a gradual and progressive advancement in the divine life. Hence corruption will be at work, as well as grace; and, whilst the spirit lusts against the flesh, the flesh will lust against the spirit, and in some cases prevail against it, to the disturbing and defiling of the Church. So it was even in the Apostolic age; and even where Paul himself preached. A party-spirit early prevailed in the Church of Corinth; different parties arraying themselves under different heads; some saying, that they were of Paul, others of Apollos, others of Cephas, and others of Christ[a]. To repress these contentions, the Apostle remonstrated with the people on the impropriety of their conduct: and, having exposed the evil of such a spirit, he now, in conclusion, shews, that to "glory in men" is highly criminal; because of,

I. Our

[a] 1 Cor. i. 12.

I. Our interest in God—

All that God has, belongs to us, if we believe in Christ:

1. His servants are ours—

[They are ours, with all their talents, and with all their labours: the most eminent among them is but "a steward of the Mysteries of God," appointed by God to dispense them to his people; "an earthen vessel, in which treasures" are deposited by him for their use. They are Christ's servants; and they are ours for his sake[b]. Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas were not endowed with their respective powers for their own sake, but for the sake of the Church and of the world; as we are expressly told: When "Christ ascended up on high, he gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ[c]:" So that all to whom they are sent, may consider them as among their treasures, the gifts of God to them for the benefit of their souls.]

2. His creatures are ours—

[The whole "world," and all that it contains, is ours, if we believe in Christ. The sun is ours to light us by day, and the moon and stars by night. The rain is ours, and the produce of universal nature, as far as is for our good. As to the actual possession of it, we may have but little; but as to the sanctified enjoyment, we have all. St. Paul speaks of himself as often oppressed with want and nakedness: yet, notwithstanding in appearance he had nothing, in reality he "possessed all things[d]." Little as a worldly mind can enter into the idea, it is a fact, that the poor godly man has a richer enjoyment of his pittance, than the most opulent of ungodly men have of all their sumptuous feasts and large estates. To live by faith is a sublimer happiness than to live by sense; because in the cup of one who so lives, there is an ingredient which the other never tasted, and never can taste: "God himself is the portion of his inheritance, and of his cup[e]:" Whether he have little or much, he enjoys God in it; and therefore he has the best possible use of all sublunary good.]

3. His dispensations are ours—

["Life," with all its comforts, belongs to the Believer; nor can it ever be taken from him till his appointed time be come. "Death" also is among the number of his possessions. Terrible as it is to the Unbeliever, it ceases to be so when once

[b] 2 Cor. iv. 5.
[c] Eph. iv. 11, 12.
[d] 2 Cor. vi. 10.
[e] Ps. xvi. 5.

once we give ourselves up unfeignedly to Christ as his peculiar people: from that moment its sting is drawn: and every man who can say with truth, "To me to live is Christ," may with the fullest assurance add, "To me to die is gain[f]." The pains and sorrows which usually precede death are only so many means of purifying the soul, and of preparing it for its appearance before God: and the final stroke is no other than the opening of the gates of Paradise for the soul's admission to the full possession of its inheritance. If the stroke be more sudden and violent, it may be regarded as the fiery chariot which bore Elijah to the realms of bliss: or, if it be more mild and gradual, it may be viewed as the waggons which Joseph sent to bring his aged father to a participation of all his glory in the land of Egypt. However it may come, it is to the true Christian a termination of all his sorrows, and a consummation of all his joys. "Things present" too, of whatever kind they be, are precisely such as the Believer, if he did but see as God seeth, would choose for himself: and "things to come," however involved in impenetrable darkness at the present, are all ordered for his eternal good. To him they are uncertain: but Infinite Wisdom has ordained them all: and though these may be insulated occurrences which in themselves may be evil, they shall all, when taken together, "work for good," to those who love God[g]. Yea, for the Believer is prepared the future judgment; and for him are reserved all the glories of the eternal world. And, that we may not doubt the truth of these assertions, the affirmation is renewed at the close of this catalogue, "All are yours."]

Before we point out the particular bearing of this part of our text, we will notice the latter part, wherein is stated,

II. God's interest in us—

Here it will be necessary to mark distinctly the drift of the Apostle's argument. He is shewing, that we ought "not to glory in men," that is, not to indulge such partiality for some as to lead us to undervalue others. To evince this, he observes, that "all things are ours;" and that it is absurd to be so over-valuing a minute and comparatively insignificant *part* of our possessions, when we ought rather to be rejoicing in *the whole*: and that it is moreover highly criminal to be arranging ourselves under the standard of some favourite preacher, when we should be wholly

[f] Phil. i. 21. [g] Rom. viii. 28.

wholly and entirely given up to God as his exclusive property.

The former of these points we have already considered: the latter now calls for our attention.

We are not to give up ourselves to any man whatever, as though we had an exclusive property in him, or he in us: for,

1. We are Christ's—

[In speaking upon this, we shall not enter into it at large, but shall confine ourselves to the precise view in which we conceive it to have been spoken by the Apostle.

We are *Christ's*, and *not man's*. The Minister, who may be the honoured instrument of bringing us to Christ, has no property in us: he is only the servant whom Christ has sent to bring his bride to him. Christ is the Bridegroom; the Preacher is only the person who "presents the Bride as a chaste virgin to Him[h]:" and this is the precise view in which every convert ought to regard the person to whom the honour of bringing him to Christ is delegated. The Bride may feel obligations to the friend who conveys her to the Bridegroom; but she does not once think of shewing to him any such partiality as would interfere with the sacred and inalienable rights of her husband. Thus it should be with all who are converted through the instrumentality of men: they should regard those men as mere instruments, or, as St. Paul expresses it, "as Ministers by whom they have believed," and by whom they have received the gifts which the Lord himself, their heavenly Bridegroom, sent to them[i].

Let this then be borne in mind: "Ye are Christ's," wholly, and altogether Christ's. He formed you originally: he redeemed you with his own most precious blood: he called you by his grace: all that you are, and all that you have, is his. You must therefore consider yourselves as his; his exclusive property, in all the powers of your body, and in all the faculties of your soul. Yea, so entirely must your affections be set on him, as to make all creatures dwindle into insignificance before him, eclipsed as stars before the meridian sun.]

2. "Christ is God's,—"

[Our affections are not to be so set even on Christ himself, as to forget that he, *as our Mediator*, is only God's servant, sent to bring us to God the Father, and to deliver us up to him when the whole work entrusted to him shall be complete. The Lord Jesus Christ is to be considered in a three-fold view; as God, as Man, and as the Mediator between

[h] 2 Cor. xi. 2. [i] ver. 5.

tween God and man. As God, he is equal with the Father: as Man, and as Mediator, he is inferior to the Father; as St. Paul has said; "I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man: and the head of Christ is God[k]." He is the Father's servant, to redeem both Jews and Gentiles by his own obedience unto death[l]——— In all that he spoke, and in all that he did, he acted agreeably to the commission which he had received from the Father: and all that he suffered was "according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God the Father." Whilst this glorious work is going forward, we must look to Christ, in whom all fulness is treasured up for the use of his Church, and "in whom all fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily:" but in the last day, when all the elect shall have been gathered in, and every enemy shall have been put under the feet of our victorious Lord, the whole body, with Christ himself at their head, shall be subject unto God the Father, being delivered up to him as the supreme Head of this glorious kingdom, that "God may be all in all[m]." As *a Mediatorial* kingdom, it has been received from God the Father; and when, as a Mediatorial kingdom, there shall be no longer any need of the Mediator's office, it shall be given up into the hands of him from whose counsels it proceeded, and by whose power it was completed.

Seeing then that we, and all the whole Church, are God's exclusive property, we must, from fidelity to him, guard against the smallest disposition to alienate from him any portion of that honour and authority which are due to him alone.]

We will *improve* the subject,

1. In its negative and more appropriate view—

[We must "not glory in men." It matters little whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, be the object of our preference; the attachment which leads us to set up one above another is altogether carnal." *Four times in as many verses is this conduct characterized as carnal*[n]. Happy would it be for the Church of God, if this disposition were viewed in its proper light! for there is scarcely a place where more than one Minister officiates, but this hateful temper springs up to disturb the union and harmony of the Church. Moreover, as this temper is carnal in itself, so is it injurious to the welfare, as well of those who indulge it, as of all who are affected by it. Wherever it exists, it deprives the person of all the benefit which he might receive from those whom he so ungratefully undervalues:

[k] 1 Cor. xi. 3.
[l] Isai. xlii. 1, 6. & xlix. 1—3, 6.
[m] 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.
[n] ver. 1—4.

lues: he contributes to excite divisions in the Church of God; and, as far as in him lies, weakens the hands of those Ministers, on whom, in comparison of his favourite, he pours contempt. Brethren, let the arguments of the Apostle have their proper weight. The object of your idolatrous regard is given, not to you only, but to the whole Church of God, for whose benefit he is sent forth: and whilst he is sent for others, others also are sent for you: and you are ungrateful to God in so limiting your regards, as not to give a due proportion of them to all who seek your welfare. Besides, you are not to view *them*, so much as *God in them:* for of themselves they are nothing: whoever plants or waters, it is God alone that gives the increase [o]. To God then supremely, and to God exclusively, are your affections due: and, if you will set them on any creature, you will "provoke him to jealousy," and cause him to withdraw from you, as "Nehushtan," (*a piece of brass,*) the instrument which he had raised up for the salvation of your souls [p].]

2. In its positive and more general view—

[You should glory in God with your whole hearts. Think what reason you have to glory in him: what unspeakable benefits you have received at his hands, and what obligations you have to surrender up yourselves wholly unto him! Who, besides the Believer, can take to himself the declarations of our text? Of whom, besides him, can it be said, "All things are yours?" Survey the catalogue, Believer, and think whether there be any thing in the whole universe that you can add to it? Should not you then be contented? Should not you be thankful? or rather, should there be any bounds to your joy and gratitude? I ask not whether you be in health or sickness, in wealth or poverty, in joy or sorrow: the state you are in is that which Infinite Wisdom has ordained for your greatest good; and there awaits you, at your departure hence, the immediate and everlasting fruition of God himself. O be joyful in the Lord, all ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard day and night! And, as God is wholly yours, so be ye wholly his, in body and in soul, in time and in eternity.

We cannot however conclude without intreating all to see that these blessings do indeed belong to them. It is to the Believer, and to him alone, that they do belong: and we earnestly invite all, first, to believe in Christ as their only Saviour, and, then, to make it evident by their works that they have indeed believed; for, if our character be not clear, we can have but little comfort in the promises to which the saints alone are entitled, and of which they alone will ever receive the accomplishment— — —]

[o] ver. 6, 7. [p] 2 Kin. xviii. 4.

DCCCCLXI.

GOD'S MERCY TO THE VILEST SINNERS.

1 Cor. vi. 9—11. *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

AS long as men retain within them the seeds of their original corruption, so long they will be liable to fall into sin, and consequently they will need to be instigated by every motive that can be adduced, to persevere in the ways of holiness. Now there are scarcely any stronger incentives to obedience, than a recollection of the inseparable connexion which there is between sin and misery; and a view of the unspeakable mercies which we ourselves have received at God's hands. It was by these considerations that St. Paul urged the Corinthians to abstain from some practices in which they were engaged, and from others to which they were particularly exposed. They had gone to law with each other even in the Gentile courts, instead of settling their disputes by arbitration amongst themselves. It is probable too that some among them thought but lightly of the sin of fornication; since the close of the chapter is wholly occupied with that subject. His address to them was well adapted to the occasion; in that it appealed at once to their fears and to their gratitude; and thus secured the influence of their ingenuous feelings, as well as of those which were of a more selfish nature.

His words will lead us to shew,

I. The awful condition of the ungodly—

Those who live in sin will have no part in the inheritance of the Saints. Though some of the sins specified in this black catalogue are such as cannot be mentioned with delicacy, or thought of but with horror;

horror, yet far the greater part are as common in Christian lands as among the Heathen themselves: but, by whatever name men call themselves, they who live in such sins "shall never inherit the kingdom of God." The manner in which this declaration is made, calls for our particular attention. Mark,

1. The Appeal—

[The Apostle *appeals* to our own consciences; "Know ye not this?" However ignorant ye be, are ye not well assured in your own minds, that persons living, and dying, in the commission of any of these sins, must perish? Does not Scripture, does not reason, does not conscience tell you, that there must be a difference put between the just and unjust in the day of judgment? — — —]

2. The Caution—

[The Apostle next cautions us against self-deception. We are apt to extenuate these crimes, and to conceal their enormity by some specious name. Fornication and adultery are youthful indiscretions; drunkenness is conviviality: covetousness and extortion are prudence, and the common licence of trade. Thieving is confined to one species of dishonesty; whilst a defrauding of the revenue, and a neglect of paying one's debts, and many other kinds of theft, are practised without remorse. As for "reviling," the conversation of many consists of little else than speaking against their neighbour; and especially when they have received from him any real or fancied injury: yet *that* is considered as nothing more than a proper token of their contempt for such conduct as they disapprove. And a soft, easy, indolent, "effeminate" manner of life, such as indicates an aversion to do any thing or suffer any thing for Christ, is reputed innocent, as though a Christian had nothing to do but to please himself. Moreover, if men be free from the grosser *acts* of sin, they pay no attention to the *dispositions* of their minds; though, in reality, dispositions are as hateful to God, and as much reprobated in the text, as overt acts. But, however they may hide from their own eyes their guilt and danger, God's decree is irreversible, and his threatened vengeance shall assuredly be executed upon them.]

But, notwithstanding the danger to which sinners are exposed, the text informs us of,

II. The blessed state to which they may yet be exalted by the Gospel—

Many of the Corinthians had, while in their hea-

then state, been guilty of all the abominations mentioned in the text. But at their conversion,

1. They were received into the Christian covenant—

[The word "washed" seems to refer to their initiation into the Christian Church by the ordinance of baptism; and therefore imports, that they had been admitted into the Christian covenant. We indeed, at our conversion, are not to repeat the rite of baptism; because the baptism administered to us in our infancy was in all respects as available for us as circumcision was for the Jews; yet, since we are brought only into the *outward* bond of the covenant in our baptism, we need to be made partakers of its saving benefits: and, however abandoned we may have been in our unregenerate state, we shall be received to a full participation of its blessings, as soon as ever we repent and believe in Christ.]

2. "They were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus"—

[Justification includes not merely a remission of sins, but a being dealt with by God as innocent persons, or, in other words, an exaltation to eternal happiness and glory. Now this the Corinthians enjoyed as soon as they embraced the Gospel. They were not left to expect it after death: it was already vouchsafed unto them. For the sake of Christ all their sins were blotted out as a morning cloud. And we also, as soon as we "believe in him, shall, for his sake, be justified from all things," however abominable our past lives may have been, and however much we may have deserved to be abhorred both by God and man.]

3. "They were sanctified by the Spirit of our God"—

[The Apostle, speaking in the fulness of his heart, did not observe any particular order in the arrangement of his words; and therefore no conclusion is to be drawn from the order of them: for, in strictness of speech, our sanctification does not precede, but follows, and flows from, our justification. But what a triumph of Divine grace was here! these people, who had been sunk beneath the very beasts by their iniquities, were renewed by the Holy Ghost, and transformed into the image of their God. Surely then none of us need despair! Whatever we have been, or whatever we may yet be, we still may look to that Divine Agent, who will renew and sanctify us wholly, provided we seek his operations in the name, and for the sake, of Jesus Christ.]

ADDRESS—

ADDRESS—

1. To those who are yet living in sin—

[Is there a person here, who, whether openly or in secret, gives way to uncleanness? Thou "shalt never inherit the kingdom of God." Is there a person here who corresponds in any respect with those described in the text? Does not thy conscience tell thee, Thou must perish? If thou hast bribed, or silenced thy conscience, "deceive not thyself;" for God's word shall stand, whether thou believe it or not. Hear this, thou whoremonger, thou adulterer, &c. &c. In the name of Almighty God I declare, Thou shalt never inherit the kingdom of God, unless thou repent, and believe in Christ. Let me intreat thee seriously to consider thy guilt and danger, while there is a way of escape yet opened to thee by the Gospel.]

2. To those who have experienced pardon and sanctification by the Gospel—

[It will be always profitable for you to bear in mind what you once were: for though your actions may not have been so abominable as those referred to in the text, none of you have any right to cast a stone at others; seeing that the seeds of all evils are in your own hearts, and nothing but the preventing grace of God has made you to differ from your more-abandoned neighbour. What cause have you then to magnify and adore that grace which has so distinguished you; and to "love much, from a sense of having had much forgiven!"

Well also may a recollection of the many talents that have been forgiven you, incline you readily to forgive the pence that may be owing to you by an offending brother. It is particularly in this view that the text is introduced by the Apostle, and in this view it certainly ought to be improved. Get but a just sense of the mercies vouchsafed to you in the pardon of your sins by the blood of Jesus, and the renovation of your natures by the Holy Ghost, and you will esteem nothing too much to do for God, and no forbearance too great to exercise towards the most unworthy of mankind.]

DCCCCLXII.

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

1 Cor. ix. 19—23. *Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain*

gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

IT is a favourite sentiment with some, that the Epistles of St. Paul, having been written to particular Churches and on particular occasions, are of little importance to us at this day. And, of all the Epistles, this before us is most open to that objection, as having been, more than any other, written for the correction of some existing abuses, and in answer to some specific questions. But God, by whom the Apostle was inspired, knew that, whether the same specific points should again arise or not, the general principles by which they were to be determined would be of use to the Church in all ages: and accordingly we find, that the views and sentiments which were elicited from the Apostle on these occasions give us a deeper insight into the Christian character than we could otherwise have obtained. We are here instructed not merely by general and abstract principles, but by a practical application of those principles to circumstances fitted for the illustration of them. And we cannot but account it a great blessing to the Church, that the enemies of the Gospel were permitted so to assault the character of the Apostle, as to extort from him a vindication of it, and thereby to obtain for the Church in all ages a complete exposition of practical Christianity.

The words before us open with extraordinary precision *the nature and extent of Christian liberty*: for the fuller explanation of which we shall distinctly mark,

I. Its proper boundaries—

Liberty cannot exist without restrictions; for, if unlimited, it would degenerate into licentiousness. Besides, if every man were at liberty to act agreeably to his own corrupt wishes without any controul, the weaker would be a prey to their more powerful neighbours,

neighbours, and would be the constant victims of tyranny and oppression. St. Paul, though at liberty to vary his conduct according to circumstances, was still under a law by which his liberty was restricted: "he was not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." Christian liberty is a right to do or forbear any thing,

1. Which is not evil in itself—

[What is evil in itself can be warranted by no circumstances under heaven: "We must not do evil that good may come," even though the good which we promise ourselves be ever so great. We must not do it *for the gratification of others*. If our dearest friends and relatives endeavour to persuade us, we must be alike deaf to their menaces or intreaties. We must "not love father or mother more than Christ;" yea, we must even "hate them in comparison of Christ;" that is, we must, when their will comes in competition with that of Christ, act as if we hated them, giving no more heed to them than we would to an avowed enemy. The plain answer to be given to all who would wish us to act contrary to any command of God, is this; "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."

Neither must we do evil *for our own advantage*. If an act be sinful, we must, like the Hebrew Youths, refuse to do it, even though we saw the fiery furnace, already burning with seven-fold intenseness, ready to destroy us. So likewise, if a duty be clear, we must not be deterred from the performance of it, even though we knew that the consequence of our perseverance must be an immediate incarceration in the den of lions: like Daniel, we must prefer the maintenance of a good conscience to the preservation of courtly favour, and the avoidance of a cruel death[a]. In all such circumstances we must embrace the proffered alternative, and surrender up our lives rather than violate a command of God.]

2. Which is not evil in its consequences—

[An act perfectly innocent in itself may, by the circumstances in which we are placed, become no longer innocent. If, for instance, the eating of meat offered to an idol be likely to prove a temptation or a stumbling-block to a weak brother, we are then no longer at liberty to eat it, notwithstanding in itself it is a matter of perfect indifference. We are bound to have respect to his weakness, and to abstain from a thing which may become an occasion of sin to him: and, if we do

[a] Dan. vi. 10.

do not abstain from it, "we sin against him," and "we sin against Christ[b]."

So likewise, if a thing would be injurious to ourselves, we must not do it, even though others might be at liberty to do it. Suppose, for instance, we know from experience, that splendid equipage or apparel administers to, and calls forth into exercise, the pride and vanity of our hearts; or that a luxurious table is apt to lead us to intemperance; or that some particular amusement operates as an incitement to covetousness, or a provocative to wrath; we should deny ourselves in those particulars, and not seek an indulgence that we have reason to fear will become an occasion of sin. The express command of God in all such cases is, "Make not provision for the flesh to fulfil it in the lusts thereof[c]."

Thus under a variety of circumstances is our liberty abridged, even in things that are, under other circumstances, indifferent: for though *all* things may be lawful, they may not be expedient; and we must not so "be brought under the power of *any*," as not to be able to forego them, if the welfare either of ourselves or others demands the sacrifice[d].]

Such, we apprehend, are the limits beyond which Christian liberty has no existence. But within these limits there is abundant scope for,

II. Its legitimate operations—

In all that we do, we should keep in view the best interests of mankind—

[Whatever Paul did, or whatever he forebore, his one object was to promote the salvation of his fellow-men. This he tells us six times in the short space of four verses: and in another place he tells us, that he had the same object in view in all that he suffered: "We endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory[e]." Such must be our object also in all that we do. We must not be seeking merely to please men; for "if we please men, we cannot be the servants of Jesus Christ:" in as far as we seek to "please them, it must be solely for their good to edification[f]." To remove their prejudices, to conciliate their regards, to "choose out acceptable words," to accommodate ourselves to their apprehensions, are all legitimate methods of gaining a more easy access to their minds, in order that we may ultimately "win their souls:" and, as we administer milk or meat to persons according to their capacity to profit by it, with a view to the sustenance of their

[b] 1 Cor. viii. 8—12. [c] Rom. xiii. 14. [d] 1 Cor. vi. 12.
[e] 2 Tim. ii. 10. [f] Rom. xv. 2.

their bodies, so we may do for the benefit of their souls: and, if only we keep this end in view, we shall in all that we do "be approved and accepted both of God and man[g]."

For this end our liberty may be used without reserve—

[It is delightful to see how free and unembarrassed the Apostle was in all his intercourse with mankind, and how studiously he adapted himself to all their varied prejudices or necessities. Was he with a Jew;—he submitted freely to the yoke which Moses had imposed, though he well knew that the Gospel had freed him from it. On the other hand, was he with Gentiles who had never been subjected to the law of Moses;—he readily conformed himself to their habits. If he was with one that was weak in faith, he cheerfully bore with all his weaknesses and infirmities, and acted, as he would have done, if his own mind had been under the influence of the same doubts and fears as agitated the mind of his weaker brother. In a word, "he became all things to all men."

Now this is the very course which we should pursue: we should seek the welfare of our Brethren precisely as he did, namely, in a way *of self-denying restraint*, and in a way *of condescending compliance*.

We should seek it in a way of self-denying restraint.—Not again to recur to the mention of eating meats offered to idols, which "the Apostle would not do as long as the world should stand, if it should make his brother to offend[h];" we may see in the chapter before us how determinately he refused to accept the support to which both by the laws of God and man he was justly entitled[i]. Such concessions are most lovely; and would be productive of incalculable good in the Church of God. In a family, for instance, the governing part of it is not willing that all which an inferior member of it may think conducive to his benefit shall be allowed to him: it would become the inferior to evince a self-denying spirit, and cheerfully to concede a part of his privileges, that he may not irritate and embitter the minds of his superiors. It may be asked perhaps, "What, am I to sacrifice any thing which I think profitable to my soul?" I answer, Yes: and God would repay you for so doing, provided you did it purely from a tender concern for the welfare of your superior: the very self-denial, which such an act would call forth, would itself be a more substantial benefit to the soul, than all the gratification which would have followed from self-indulgence: and St. Paul himself has set us an example of this conduct: "I," says he,

[g] Rom. xiv. 18. [h] 1 Cor. viii. 13. [i] ver. 12, 15.

he, "please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved[k]."

We should further seek it in a way of condescending compliance.—Paul, in order to meet the prejudices of the Jews, and to gain the easier access to their minds, circumcised Timothy: and with the same view he submitted to the tedious rites and ceremonies which attended the performance of the Nazarite's vow[l]. And if we were more willing to meet the wishes of those who are prejudiced against the truth, we might greatly allay their hostility, and often win their souls. There is in many young Christians an unreasonable stiffness in relation to matters of pure indifference; and they will often plead conscience for their non-compliance, when it proceeds solely from a want of compassion for the ignorance of others, and of due concern for their souls. They will please themselves, however much their enemies be offended, when by kindness and condescension they might have operated a favourable change upon their minds.

Well do we know, that these principles may be easily perverted; and that it will often be extremely difficult to know how far, and in what manner, they are to be called forth into action. Nevertheless, the principles themselves are good, and indispensably necessary to be embraced and cultivated by all who would adorn the Gospel of Christ: and, if only we look well to the motive by which we are actuated, we shall not be likely to err very materially in the application of them. The main point to guard against is, the doing any thing which is in itself sinful, or any thing, the lawfulness of which we ourselves doubt: for we ought certainly to be fully persuaded in our minds, that the restraint which we impose on ourselves, or the concession which we make, be not contrary to any express command of God. Where the concession which others require at our hands is forbidden of God, there the rule must be observed; "We must obey God rather than man."]

From the whole view of this subject, we cannot but REMARK,

1. Of what infinite importance is the salvation of the soul—

[Whence was it that the Apostle laboured so indefatigably in every possible way to save the souls of men? Whence was it that he even "wished himself accursed from Christ, or after the example of Christ, for his brethren's sake?". Did it not proceed from a conviction, that the souls of men were of infinite value, and that, if he could but "by any means

[k] 1 Cor. x. 33. [l] Acts xxi. 26.

means save some," he would be richly repaid? But think of all that Christ did and suffered — — — and then say, Whether your souls are not of more value than ten thousand worlds; and whether any labouring, any self-denial, any sacrifice can be too great for the advancement of their eternal welfare? — — —]

2. How exalted is the morality which we are called to practise, if ever we would attain salvation!

[Doubtless it is through Christ alone, even through his blood and righteousness, that we must find acceptance with God: but we must serve Christ as well as believe in him. He has indeed fulfilled the law for us; but he has not therefore dispensed with its requirements: on the contrary, "we are under the law to Christ;" and are to fulfil his will precisely as the apostle Paul did; having our hearts filled with zeal for his glory, and with love to the souls of men. We quite mistake, if we imagine, that Christian morality consists in a mere abstinence from outward sins, or a compliance with outward observances: the heart must be given up to God, and the whole soul be engaged in seeking his glory. It is well known, that by nature we are altogether selfish, and desirous that every thing should bend to our will, and every person should consult it: but grace teaches us to have our own will mortified and subdued; and "to live no longer to ourselves, but altogether to our God." O Brethren, aim at *this:* be satisfied with nothing short of *this:* and be aspiring after this blessed attainment daily, and with your whole hearts: for it is in this way only that you can "be partakers of the Gospel," and of the inheritance of the saints in light[m]. It is by this that you will approve yourselves "followers of Paul, as he was of Christ."]

3. How greatly do we need to be guided and strengthened by the Holy Spirit!

[Who is sufficient for these things? These attainments are high and difficult; and the very way to them is dark and slippery. It is easy to think ourselves upright in our intentions, when we are in reality actuated by a desire of man's applause, or a fear of his displeasure. It is easy also to fancy that we are sacrificing our own wishes for the good of others, when we are only gratifying our own earthly and carnal desires. In these things none but God can keep us from error; none but God can "perfect that which concerneth us." Pray then, that the Holy Spirit may guide you into all truth. Pray, that He, who upheld the Saviour in all his

[m] ver. 23.

his arduous work, may "form in you the mind that was in Christ Jesus." Thus you may hope to be preserved blameless amidst all the difficulties with which you are encompassed, and to win by your conversation many, who would never have been won by the word alone.]

DCCCCLXIII.

THE MANNER IN WHICH ST. PAUL SOUGHT FOR HEAVEN.

1 Cor. ix. 26, 27. *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

THE Scripture teaches us no less by examples, than by precepts. Doubtless the great exemplar, which all are to follow, is the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom there was no sin at all. But, next to him, the Apostles deserve our regard. St. Paul frequently exhorts us to be imitators of him: but he always limits that counsel by the superior regard which we owe to Christ; and bids us to follow him, so far only as he followed Christ. In this view he introduces the passage which we have just read. He has been recommending to the Corinthians a holy self-denying conduct. To enforce his exhortation, he states to them how he acted under a variety of difficult circumstances: and lastly, in reference to the Isthmian Games which were celebrated in that city, he gives them, in the words before us, a very animated view of his own experience, which he proposes to them for their imitation.

We may notice in these words,

I. The manner in which the Apostle exerted himself—

It is scarcely necessary to say, that heaven was the prize for which he contended. For this he laboured,

1. With

1. With careful attention

[As the course was precisely marked out for those who ran in the race, so there were certain rules prescribed in every one of the games; in allusion to which St. Paul elsewhere says, "If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully[b]." Now in running the Christian race, there are rules indispensably necessary to be observed, if we would have the prize adjudged to us. One rule in particular we mention, because it is expressly mentioned by the Apostle, and because it virtually includes all others: it is, that we must "look unto Jesus," as the pattern for our imitation, as the source of our strength, as the medium of our acceptance, "as the Author and the Finisher of our faith[c]." Now the Apostle did not run as a person regardless of the rules, but as one who was determined in all things to observe them.

For want of this care, many who appear desirous of getting to heaven, fall short of it at last: they are not sufficiently instructed, especially in relation to the rule that has been specified: they are apt to satisfy themselves with rules of their own devising; and on this account they are found at last to have "spent their strength for nought."]

2. With ardent zeal—

[A person who should be brandishing, as it were, his arms, and should "beat the air" in a way of sportive exercise, would be very unlike to one who was engaged in actual combat. Such a difference exists between those who merely profess to engage with their spiritual enemies, and those who are really "warring a good warfare:" nor is this difference less visible in the Christian world, than it would have been on the stage where such spectacles were exhibited. Now the Apostle was not a mere pretender to religion: he saw too much of the importance of eternal things to waste his time in empty professions: he knew that, if he did not vanquish his enemies, his enemies would destroy him; and therefore he strove to "fight a good fight," and to "quit himself like a man," who would rather die than yield.]

3. With resolute self-denial—

[Those who intended to engage in the different games, used

[a] The precise sense of the text cannot easily be determined. Ὡς οὐκ ἀδήλως may mean, "Not without distinguishing himself;" and ὡς οὐκ ἀέρα δέρων may mean, "Not as one that misses his blow." The author has given what he apprehends to be a just sense, without taking upon him to determine between the opinions of contending Commentators. See Doddridge (on the place), who throws a beautiful light on the last clause of the text.

[b] 2 Tim. ii. 5. [c] Heb. xii. 1, 2.

used much self-denial in the whole of their diet and mode of living, in order that they might be the better able to endure the fatigues and hardships which they must inevitably experience in the contest: and, when they came to the trial, they put forth all their strength, that they might gain the victory. The enemies with which the Apostle contended, were numerous and mighty. Those which he particularly refers to in the text, were, his own in-dwelling corruptions. He found that, in common with all others, he had "lusts warring in his members," yea, "warring against his soul." To subdue these, it was necessary that he should put forth all his strength. He had already gained a great advantage over them, as a man who had got his antagonist's head under his arm, and was beating him in the face with all his might[d]. He would not give them any liberty to regain their former ascendancy, but was determined to subdue them utterly.]

We shall easily account for these exertions, when we call to mind,

II. The considerations by which he was actuated—

It is painful to see how persons, who are enslaved by human systems, will wrest the Scriptures, to make them coincide with their own views. Did the Apostle mean to say, that he exerted himself thus, merely lest he should by any means be betrayed into some fault, which should cause him to be disapproved of *men?* Had he not respect to God also, and to his eternal state? No man living, whose judgment was not warped by a predilection for a system of his own, could doubt one moment but that the Apostle was actuated by two considerations;

1. A hope of gaining the prize—

[This is manifestly implied in his words: and such an hope is the main spring of activity to every Christian that is under heaven. The Apostle well knew, how infinitely an unfading crown of glory surpasses the perishable chaplets that were awarded to the visitors in the different games. He could not endure the idea, that others should take so much pains to obtain a corruptible crown, which yet only *one* would win; and that he himself should be remiss in seeking an incorruptible crown, which *all* who contended earnestly for it must obtain. The securing of this he felt to be *the one thing needful;* and therefore he determined to make it the one object of his ambition.]

2. A

[d] This seems to be implied in ὑπωπιάζω μου τὸ σῶμα.

2. A fear of losing it—

[The person who executed the office of herald in the different games, introduced others, and encouraged them to the contest, but did not contend himself. But the Christian Herald, who stirs up and encourages others to engage in the race or combat, must himself both run and fight: and, if he do not engage with his whole heart, however he may have animated others, he himself will not be deemed worthy of the prize. Now the Apostle felt that the same exertions were necessary for him as for all others; and that peculiar guilt and shame would attach to him, if he, after having preached successfully to others, should at last fail of success himself. On this account therefore he laboured to "destroy the whole body of sin." He was conscious, that the smallest advantage gained by his bodily appetites might be attended with the most fatal consequences; and therefore he strove to "mortify his earthly members," and to "crucify his flesh with its affections and lusts."]

ADDRESS,

1. Those who are satisfied with the name and profession of Christianity—

[Were such a life as yours sufficient to obtain the prize, there were no propriety in such figures as the Apostle has used in the text. Be assured, that, if St. Paul found such exertions necessary for himself, they are no less so for you: and, that if he could not get to heaven without them, much less can you.]

2. Those who have relaxed their exertions—

[It is not the beginning well, but the enduring to the end, that will avail to the saving of the soul. Some indeed will say, "Once a Child of God, and always so:" but God warns you, that if any man turn back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him. It is only by a patient continuance in well-doing that you can obtain the glory and honour and immortality which you profess to seek for. The labour that has been bestowed upon you is all in vain, if you do not maintain your stedfastness even to the end. "Be not weary therefore in well-doing; for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not."]

3. Those who are discouraged through apprehensions of failure—

[Well might all be discouraged, if success depended on our own strength. But "God has laid help upon One that is mighty;" and it is our privilege to be "strong in the Lord and

and in the power of his might." However weak therefore you yourselves are, and however powerful your enemies, you have no reason to despond, since, "through the strength of Christ you can do all things."]

4. Those who are "contending earnestly for the faith" and practice of the Gospel—

[You know not indeed the precise measure of your course: but it is pleasing to reflect, that it may very soon be terminated, and that the prize shall be adjudged, not to the one who surpasses all others, but to all who "run their race with patience." Methinks, the Saviour, the Judge of all, is holding forth the prize to you; and the whole host of heaven are witnesses of your exertions. Consider the countless multitudes that are already crowned, and that have bid an everlasting adieu to all the dangers of warfare, and the fatigues of running. Soon your hour also shall arrive: only, whenever it may arrive, let it find you exerting yourselves with all your might; that you may be able to say with your dying breath, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me; and not unto me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."]

DCCCCLXIV.

APPEAL TO MEN OF WISDOM AND CANDOUR.*

1 Cor. x. 15. *I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.*

AMONGST the various systems of Religion that have been promulgated, there is this remarkable difference; that, whilst those which have been devised by man were founded on the deductions of human reason, that which has been revealed by God is founded solely on his own authority. Every declaration, every precept, every promise, every threatening, is introduced with "Thus saith the Lord." Deliberation and discussion respecting these declarations of God, are altogether superseded: man has no alternative, he must believe and obey whatever his God has spoken.

But though revealed religion is neither founded on human reason, nor makes its appeal to it, yet it is perfectly consistent with reason, and approves itself to the judgment

* This, and the Three following Discourses, were preached before the University of Cambridge.

judgment of every one whose mind is enlightened by the Spirit of God, and whose passions are subjugated to the higher powers of the soul.

The appeal which the Apostle makes in our text to the judgment of the Corinthian Church has respect indeed to only one particular point, the maintaining of communion with Heathens in their idolatrous sacrifices and oblations. This, as he observes, was inconsistent with their professed allegiance to Christ, and with all hope of participating the blessings of his salvation: and so unquestionable was this truth, that he did not hesitate to appeal to their judgment respecting it.

We are far from saying that all the truths of Christianity are as level with the capacity of men as that which is the subject of the Apostle's appeal: but still we are persuaded, that there is no part of our religion repugnant to reason, nor any part which enlightened reason must not highly approve.

In confirmation of this sentiment we shall endeavour to shew,

I. That the Gospel approves itself to all who are truly wise.

II. That it is the duty of every man to exercise his judgment in relation to it.

I. That the Gospel approves itself to all who are truly wise—

There is a wisdom to which the Gospel does not approve itself,—I mean "the wisdom of this world," as it is called, even that which is both the root and offspring of philosophic pride. Between this wisdom and the Gospel there is as inveterate an opposition as between light and darkness: the Gospel is regarded by it as foolishness; and itself is no other than foolishness in the sight of God. The Apostle tells us, that by this wisdom the world neither knew God, nor could possibly find him out: that God hath so formed his Gospel as to "destroy the wisdom of the wise, and to bring to nought the understanding of the prudent." Remarkable is that triumphant language of the Apostle, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this

this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

If it be asked, Why this wisdom is so much at variance with the Gospel? we answer, that men filled with the conceit of their own sufficiency, and wise in their own eyes, are ready to prescribe to God what he shall speak; receiving only what accords with their own preconceived opinions, and rejecting every thing that is not accommodated to their carnal apprehensions. They do not read the Scriptures to learn of God, but rather to criticise what he has revealed, and to sit in judgment upon all that he has spoken. Is it to be wondered at, that the Gospel, which is full of mysteries, should not approve itself to them? yea, that it should be a stumbling-block and an offence to them? It is so, and it must be so, till they shall see that "God is wiser than man," and that "if any man would be wise, he must become a fool, that he may be wise."

But though to such proud and self-sufficient sciolists the Gospel of God is foolishness, yet to the truly wise it is a revelation every way worthy of its great Author.

By the truly wise, we mean those persons who are sensible that they stand in need of reconciliation with their offended God, and that the Gospel is a revelation from God respecting the provision which he has made for our restoration to his favour. These persons, conscious of the insufficiency of human wisdom to find out such a plan for the salvation of mankind, receive with humility what God has revealed; and, the instant they know his mind and will, they receive his testimony with the liveliest gratitude, and make it the one ground of all their hopes. These are truly wise; they presume not to dispute with God about the means he has provided, or the terms he has offered, for their salvation; but they accept thankfully what he has so graciously planned, and so freely offered.

To persons of this description the Gospel does approve itself as the wisdom of God and the power of God. It approves itself both *as a Revelation*, and *as a Remedy*.—*As a Revelation*, it appears to stand on a basis that is immoveable; and the evidence of its divine authority is considered

considered as incomparably stronger than any that can be adduced for any other record under heaven. *As a Remedy*, it appears exactly suited to the necessities of fallen man, providing wisdom for the ignorant, righteousness for the guilty, sanctification for the polluted, and redemption for the bond-slaves of sin and Satan. It is further recommended to their approval by the honour which it brings to all the perfections of the Deity, in that justice is no more set aside than mercy, nor truth is violated any more than holiness; but every perfection of God is harmoniously exercised, and more glorified, than it could have been, if such a salvation had never been devised.

We do not at present enter into the particulars of this Gospel, because that will be the subject of our future discourses: but we would give a general clue whereby to discover the true Gospel from every thing that falsely assumes that name. It will be generally granted, that the Gospel which the apostle Paul preached, was the true Gospel: and we find, that the foregoing marks were inseparable from his doctrines: his statements were disapproved by those who were carried away, either by "philosophy and vain deceit," on the one hand, or by superstition on the other hand: to the Jews his doctrine was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to those who were called and taught by divine grace, it was the wisdom of God and the power of God. If therefore the Gospel which we preach be disapproved by the same persons as disapproved of his, we have so far an evidence in its favour; whereas, if our Gospel be approved by those who were averse to his, then it is evident that we do not preach the same Gospel as he did. To unsanctified wisdom, the truth of God ever was, and ever must be, foolishness; but to those who are possessed of true wisdom, it is, and ever will be, a stupendous effort of wisdom and of love for the recovery and salvation of a ruined world.

The intent of our present discourse is to bespeak your candour in reference to those which may follow it, and to shew that, at least in our own judgment, there is such a reasonableness in all our doctrines as must of necessity

commend itself to every candid inquirer. We wish not one sentiment to be embraced, without a firm conviction of its truth: we wish every word we utter to be brought to the test of Scripture and of true wisdom. We would say to every man, "Prove all things, and hold fast that only which is good[a]."

To impress on our minds the importance of making for ourselves a candid inquiry into the Gospel of Christ, we proceed to shew,

II. That it is the duty of every man to exercise his judgment in relation to it—

God himself is pleased on some occasions to make an appeal to us respecting his own dealings with mankind: "Judge, I pray you," says he, "betwixt me and my vineyard:" and again, "Are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" In truth, though he is not to be dealt with by us as if he were bound to "give an account to us of any of his matters," yet he treats us as rational creatures, and expects us to use our reason in relation to our spiritual, as well as our temporal, concerns. He draws us indeed, and expects that we should give ourselves up to the influence of his grace; but "he draws us with the cords of a man," that is, with such influences as are suited to our faculties as rational agents. Still, however, we must remember, that, in forming our judgment of the truths revealed to us, we are not called to determine before hand what it becomes him to reveal; but only by a diligent attention to his written word to consider what he has revealed: and if at first we find such things as we did not expect, or such things as seem to oppose the sentiments we have imbibed, we must not hastily determine that his word is not true, but must suspect our own competency to judge of it, and must say, "What I know not now, I shall know hereafter."

In executing this important duty we shall do well to observe the following rules; namely,

To form our judgment with care—
To exercise it with candour—and
To implore of God the enlightening and sanctifying influences

[a] 1 Thess. v. 21.

influences of his Spirit, that we may be preserved from error, and be guided into all truth.

We must, in the first place, *form our judgment with care.*—It is no easy matter to search out all the mysteries of our holy religion, and to attain a clear and just knowledge of the Inspired Volume. There are confessedly many passages which are difficult to be understood, and many passages which appear to have, what may be called, an opposite and contradictory aspect. To explain all these, and to reconcile them with each other, and to gather out of them one entire and consistent plan of salvation, is surely no easy work: it should be undertaken with fear and trembling; and no pains should be spared to execute it aright. To take one set of texts, and to wrest the opposing texts to a sense which they were never designed to bear, will save us indeed much trouble, and gratify a proud contentious spirit; but it will never bring us to a just view of the truth as it is in Jesus. The way to solve the difficulties of Scripture, is, to give to every declaration of God its proper force, and then to mark the subserviency of one truth to others which appear opposed to it. A person, who should, in an ignorant and superficial manner, observe the opposite motions that are found in a great engine, would be ready to suppose that the wheels would obstruct each other: but on a closer inspection he would find, that there is a subserviency of one part to another, and that all the motions, however opposite in appearance, tend in reality to one common end. Thus it is in the Scriptures of truth; there is no real opposition between one part and another; but every truth has its proper place in the system, and its proper use: if one encourages, another humbles: if one inspires confidence, another stimulates to activity: and true wisdom will lead us to assign to every truth that place and that measure of importance which seem to be given to it in the Sacred Volume. Were this mode of investigating the holy Scriptures more generally adopted, there would be an end of almost all the controversies which agitate and distract the Christian world. The very disposition of mind which would be exercised in such endeavours, would go far to rectify

rectify our judgment, and would divest error of more than half its evils.

If it be said, that all have not leisure or ability for such examination of the holy Scriptures, we answer, That, whether we have more or less of leisure and ability, this should be our mode of proceeding; and those especially, who are to teach others, should be careful to form their judgment in this way. The Scriptures should be studied diligently throughout; the design of the Inspired Writers should be especially attended to; the scope of every distinct passage should be ascertained, by a strict examination of the context; and the general analogy of faith must be borne in mind, in order to regulate us in our interpretation of passages that are of more doubtful signification. In a word, we should without prejudice or partiality attend to every part of the Sacred Records, and then judge, as before God, respecting the genuine import of the whole. Whatever sentiment is brought before us as of heavenly origin and of divine authority, we must bring it to the law and to the testimony, and give it only such weight in our minds as shall appear to be justified by the general tenor of the Inspired Volume. It was by such care that the Beræans attained the knowledge of salvation; and by similar care we may confidently hope to be guided gradually into all truth.

Having thus formed our judgment, we must, in the next place, *exercise it with candour*.—There will to the last, whatever means be used for the regulating of our judgment, be some points whereon there will be a difference of opinion. The minds of men are differently constructed; and there are no two men in the universe who on all points think alike. It must be expected, therefore, that some diversity of sentiment will remain in reference to religion, as well as on every other subject under heaven. Aware of this, we should form our judgment with diffidence, especially on those points where men of piety have differed from each other. We should consider ourselves as liable to err, no less than others. To imagine that we are in possession of all truth, and to take for granted that all who differ from us must of necessity be wrong, is not consistent with Christian

Christian modesty. Of course, if we embrace an opinion, we must of necessity do it, under the idea that the sentiment is just; but, knowing how weak and fallible we are, we should think it possible that those who differ from us may be right; or, at all events, that the truth may be partly on their side as well as on ours. But even where we feel greater confidence as to the rectitude of our judgment, we should feel no hostility to those who differ from us: they have the same right to exercise their judgment as we; and we should no more be offended with them for not viewing things in the same light as we, than for their not resembling us in the stature of their body or the features of their countenance. By this observation we do not mean to express an approbation of indifference respecting religious sentiments; for there are sentiments that should be dearer to us than life itself: but it is intolerance, which we disapprove; it is a readiness to condemn others on account of their religious opinions, and to load them with all manner of obloquy. *This*, I say, is what we deprecate; and too much reason there is to deprecate it; since the indulgence of this hateful disposition is the common error of all parties. To be fully persuaded in our own minds, after a due course of diligent inquiry, is well; but to brand persons with opprobrious names, because they see not with our eyes; and to misrepresent their sentiments, putting into their mouths statements which they never make, and loading their real statements with consequences which they disavow and abhor, is a mode of proceeding which tends only to generate endless contentions, and to destroy that love which is the sum and substance of all true religion. The liberty which we use ourselves, we should concede to others; and if we think others have adopted erroneous sentiments, we should endeavour to set them right; but we should do it, not with railing accusations, but in kindness and a spirit of love.

But the third rule which we mentioned as deserving our attention, is above all things necessary to be observed: We must *implore of God the enlightening and sanctifying influences of his Spirit, that we may be preserved*

served from error, and be guided into all truth.—We are all by nature blind to the things of God: there is a vail upon our hearts, precisely as there was in the Apostolic age, and still continues to be upon the hearts of the Jews. "The natural man," says St. Paul, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Even the discourses of our blessed Lord and Saviour, notwithstanding his confirmation of them by miracles unnumbered, could not convince those who did not choose to be convinced: nor were the Apostles themselves so enlightened by his instructions during the whole time of his Ministry upon earth, but that they needed after his resurrection the influences of his Spirit to "open their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures." The same influence *we* need: we must have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation given to us, to discover to us the things of the Spirit; and, unless "God shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," we shall continue in darkness to our dying hour. Of this blindness we should be aware; for, if we are not sensible of our need of the Holy Spirit to teach and guide us, we shall never seek his influences, nor ever be qualified to form a correct judgment of the things which are revealed to us. Even Timothy, long after he had ministered the Gospel with great success, needed not only the instructions of Paul, but the teachings of the Holy Spirit, to render them effectual: "Consider what I say," says St. Paul to him; "and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

This need of divine teaching we are all by nature averse to acknowledge. One of the last things that we are brought to confess, is, the insufficiency of our own wisdom to understand the sublime truths of Christianity. But, if we look around us, we see many possessing all the same privileges with ourselves, and yet so blinded by prejudice or passion, as not to discern any one truth aright: the Divinity of our blessed Lord, his atonement for sin, the influences of his Spirit, the necessity of a renewed

renewed heart, together with many other truths, are boldly denied by them; or, if acknowledged as doctrines that are revealed, they are utterly disregarded as to any practical effect upon the soul. This clearly proves the great truth we are insisting on; namely, that we must all be taught of God, and that, without his teaching, we shall know nothing as we ought to know.

But we observed, that we need the sanctifying, as well as the illuminating, influences of the Holy Spirit: for we have many corrupt affections, which it is the very intention of the Gospel to eradicate; and under the influence of them we lean to those doctrines which tolerate, rather than to those which would mortify and subdue, our favourite propensities. How then can we judge aright whilst we are influenced by such a bias? "Our eye being evil, we shall of necessity be in darkness; and our eye must be made single, before the whole body can be full of light." This single eye then must be given us by the Holy Spirit. Instead of loving darkness rather than light, we must love the light, and come to the light, on purpose that the nature and quality of our actions may be made manifest. Let our first object then be to seek of God the gift of his Holy Spirit: (for he has said, that, "if any man lack wisdom, and ask it of him, he will give it liberally and without upbraiding:") and then, in dependence on the sacred guidance of the Spirit, let us examine every part of God's word. Let us in particular desire to be conformed to the word as far we understand it; and then there is no fear but that we shall be guided into all truth, as far at least as shall be necessary for our own personal welfare, and for the transforming of our souls into the image of our God.

We cannot conclude this part of our subject with more appropriate words than those of our excellent Liturgy, in which we intreat you to accompany us from your inmost souls[b]: "O Lord, from whom all good things do come; grant to us thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

[b] Collect for 5th Sunday after Easter.

DCCCCLXV.

ON THE CORRUPTION OF HUMAN NATURE.

1 Cor. x. 15.—*I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.*

IN the Appeal, which we have proposed to make to your judgment, we shall confine ourselves to things of primary and fundamental importance. We are little disposed to enter upon a field of doubtful disputation: for though we think that every truth in the holy Scriptures is important, and that some of those points which are more controverted are exceeding valuable, when received rightly and improved for our advancement in the divine life; yet, as the acceptance or rejection of them may consist with real and vital piety, we gladly wave all consideration of them, it being our wish, not to establish the dogmas of a party, but to bring home to the hearts and consciences of our hearers those principles which constitute the basis of our holy religion.

The very first of these principles is, that man is a fallen creature, guilty, polluted, helpless. The knowledge of this lies at the root of all true religion. In proportion as this is seen and felt, will the provision made for our recovery by Jesus Christ be valued: and in proportion as persons either overlook, or maintain in theory only, this truth, the whole plan of salvation by Christ will be disregarded and despised.

But the views and sentiments of those who maintain the depravity of our fallen nature are frequently and greatly misrepresented. Injudicious persons, it is true, may speak unguardedly and unadvisedly on this subject, as they may well be expected to do on every subject: but as the crudities of an ill-informed and violent partisan could not properly be stated as exhibiting a just view of the principles of any government; so neither can the rash unqualified assertions of the inexperienced be justly imputed to those who promulgate truth in its more sober and measured forms. It were to be wished, indeed, that our opponents would content themselves with statements that may be found: but they far exceed the wildest reveries that have ever issued from any ignorant enthusiast, and represent those who maintain the total depravity

depravity of our nature as reducing men to the condition of stocks and stones.

We beg leave therefore to state with some measure of precision what we mean, when we say that man is altogether polluted in every faculty of his soul, and destitute of all true goodness.

We do not mean to say that men may not be *comparatively* good by nature. There is as great a difference between men's natural dispositions as between their intellectual powers. As some children are quick and lively in their apprehension, whilst others are dull and stupid; so some are mild, affectionate, and generous in their tempers, whilst others are fierce, vindictive, and selfish. The children of the same parents, who have seen only the same examples set before them, are often as different in their dispositions, as if no ground of resemblance had existed between them.

In like manner we concede that persons may be *morally good*, not merely in comparison of others, but to a certain degree really and substantially so: that is, a person may possess by nature such a measure of candour, and benevolence, and integrity, as almost to put to shame those who profess to have been renewed by grace. How much, indeed, of these dispositions may arise from education as well as from nature, we are not anxious to inquire: we wish to give to nature as much as can with any shew of reason be claimed for her; and then to point out that kind and measure of goodness which she never communicated to any man, nor ever enabled any person to attain.

We say then, that no man by nature is *spiritually* good, or good *towards God*. No man by nature loves God, or delights himself in God. No man truly fears him. There may be a superstitious dread of him as an Almighty Being, but no real fear to offend him, no true desire to please and glorify him. No one by nature has, what I may call, a creature-like spirit towards him. No one feels his obligations towards him as his Creator, or places implicit confidence in him as his Preserver, or rejoices in him as his Benefactor, or delights to execute his will as his Governor, or labours to approve himself to him

as

as his Judge. *A spirit of independence* pervades every child of Adam, and is, perhaps beyond every thing else, the great effect and evidence of our apostacy from God. Self-will, self-seeking, self-confidence, self-complacency, are but so many branches issuing from this root. The loss of that creature-like spirit which possessed the mind of Adam in Paradise, is absolutely universal. Whatever differences there may be between men as to their *moral* dispositions, there is none in this: self has usurped the place of God, and is to every man by nature the principle and end of all his actions.

As we have no longer by nature a creature-like spirit, so neither have we, what, if we may be allowed the expression, we would call, a sinner-like spirit. It might be supposed that the universal fruit of our fall should be contrition, and self-lothing, and self-abhorrence: and that, a way having been revealed for our restoration to God's favour, we should be occupied day and night in the grateful contemplation of it, and in the pursuit of so inestimable a blessing. But here again we are all upon a par: the men of finer clay and more exquisite workmanship, are here on a level with vessels of the most base materials and most degraded use. A spirit of humiliation is never found, but as it is infused into the soul by the Spirit of God. It might be supposed, that the desire of obtaining reconciliation with God should stimulate every Child of man to earnest inquiries after a Saviour, and to grateful thanksgivings to God for the unspeakable gift of his only dear Son. But so far are these feelings from being the natural growth of the human heart, that they are never formed in the heart but with great difficulty, nor ever preserved alive there but with constant vigilance and unremitting exertions. We do indeed read of a Samuel, a Josiah, a Timothy, sanctified from an early period of life: but this was not in consequence of any natural piety in them any more than in others; but in consequence of peculiar operations of Divine grace upon their souls.

Connected with this want of a sinner-like spirit, is a love of sin in all its branches. We say again, there is not in every man the same *predominance* of sin in all its branches;

branches; but the same *propensity to it* there is: the *seed* of every evil lies buried in our fallen nature: in some it acquires more strength than in others, and manifests itself by more hateful fruits; but in all it lives, it vegetates, and, if circumstances were to arise to call it forth, would grow up to maturity in one as well as in another.

Thus we have delivered our sentiments on the corruption of man's nature; and we will add a few words respecting that which is so intimately connected with it—our natural inability to do any thing that is good.

When a nature is so depraved, as ours from the foregoing statement appears to be, there can be no disposition to any thing truly and spiritually good: on the contrary, there must be an aversion to what is good, and, in consequence of that, an incapacity to engage successfully in the prosecution or performance of any good thing. But here we beg to be distinctly understood, that the incapacity to do any thing that is good is a *moral*, and *not a physical* incapacity. A man is not under the same *kind* of incapacity to stop the progress of his corruptions that he is to stop the sun in its course: it is because of his inveterate inclination to evil, and aversion to what is good, that he cannot bring the powers of his mind to bear on the prosecution of any thing that is truly and spiritually good; if he had the inclination and the desire, his exertions would be proportioned to the extent of those desires: and though we are far from saying that those exertions would be sufficient of themselves for the accomplishment of his object, they would certainly be accompanied with power from on high, and such a power too as should render them effectual for the desired end. It is the want of these pious inclinations that keeps us from looking unto God for his effectual aid; and consequently from attaining that strength, whereby alone we can subdue and mortify our natural corruptions.

When therefore we say, that man is by nature altogether helpless, and incapable of doing any thing that is good, we wish it to be borne in mind, what the incapacity is of which we speak. Were it an incapacity that rendered all exertion nugatory, man's responsibility for his

his actions would, as far as relates to that point, be at an end; but our incapacity arising altogether from the inveteracy of our love to sin, and the total alienation of our hearts from what is truly good, it ceases to be an extenuation of our guilt, and becomes rather an aggravation of it.

We have now spoken what will be sufficient to mark our sentiments respecting the corruption and helplessness of fallen man. We say of man, that he is altogether destitute of every thing that is truly and spiritually good, and altogether prone to evil; though, in respect of the visible fruits of evil, there is a considerable difference between one and another. We say too that man is incapable of doing any thing that is truly and spiritually good; but that his incapacity arises, not from any want of physical powers, but of moral and spiritual dispositions. He has the same power to exercise his mind in one thing as in another, if he have the inclination and desire so to do; the fault is in his will, which is averse to good, and in his affections, which are set on evil. At the same time, whatever be the state of a man's will and affections, he has not in himself the power to do the will of God; for that end he must be strengthened by the Spirit of God: but that aid no man shall want, who seeks it from God in spirit and in truth.

And now I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say: Is there any thing extravagant in this statement? Is there any thing that can warrant such representations as are too often given of the sentiments of those who maintain the doctrines above considered? We speak not as to wise men only, but as to men of candour and liberality, of truth and equity: is there any thing here which is not most decidedly declared in the Holy Scriptures? Is there any thing which is not sanctioned and confirmed by all the authentic records of the doctrines of our Church?

Let us briefly institute this inquiry, in order that the truth of our statement may yet more abundantly appear.

What saith the Scripture? The testimony of the Most High God is this, that when he looked down from heaven to behold the Children of men, he saw "that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and

and that *every imagination* of the thoughts of man's heart was *only evil continually*[c]." Can the total corruption of our nature be stated in stronger terms than these? But it will be more satisfactory, perhaps, to refer to a passage where an inspired Apostle is establishing the very point in question. Look we then to the third chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and let us hear what he says. He is proving that all mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under sin; and in support of his assertions he brings together a whole cloud of witnesses: "It is written," says he; "There is none good, no, not one: there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God: they are all gone out of the way: they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one[d]." Have we spoken any thing stronger than this? Yet, in a subsequent chapter, the Apostle speaks in stronger language still: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be[e]." In another Epistle he denies the power of any man by nature even so much as to know the things of the Spirit; "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned[f]." Nor does he confine these assertions to any particular age or nation: he says of himself and his fellow Apostles, that even they, in their unregenerate state, "fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were *by nature* children of wrath, even as others[g]." Even after he was regenerate, he still speaks of himself, so far as he was yet unrenewed, as destitute of all good; "In me, that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing."

We think that this will abundantly suffice for the confirmation of our sentiments from Scripture. The person that will not be convinced by these passages, would not be convinced even though we were to multiply quotations to ever so great an extent.

Turn we then to what, with this assembly at least, must

[c] Gen. vi. 5. [d] Rom. iii. 9—12. [e] Rom. viii. 7.
[f] 1 Cor. ii. 14. [g] Eph. ii. 3.

must have considerable weight, I mean the authentic records of the doctrines of our Church. In the 9th article, intitled "Original or Birth Sin," it is said, "Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the fault and corruption of *every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam*, whereby man is *very far* gone from original righteousness, and is *of his own nature inclined to evil*, so that the flesh lusteth *always* contrary to the spirit; and therefore *in every person born into this world* it deserveth God's wrath and damnation." Then, in reference to the impotency of man to do any thing that is truly good, it is said in the next article, "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will."

We forbear to comment on these articles, because all of us can refer to them and examine them for ourselves: but there is an end of all certainty in language if these articles do not affirm all that we have expressed in the foregoing statement. The homilies of our Church speak in numberless passages to the same effect. In that for Whitsunday, it is said, "Man of his own nature is fleshly and carnal, corrupt and naught, sinful and disobedient to God, *without any spark of goodness in him*, (mark these words, "*without any spark of goodness in him*,") without any virtuous or godly motion, only given to evil thoughts and wicked deeds." And in our Liturgy, our helplessness is stated in terms equally strong; in the Collect for the second Sunday in Lent, we address the Deity in the following words; "Almighty God, who seest that we have *no power of ourselves to help ourselves*."— — —

It would occupy too much time if we were to multiply quotations on these subjects. The articles, the homilies, the liturgy, all abound with expressions to the same effect; so that no man can read them with candour,

dour, and doubt what the sentiments of our Reformers were on these subjects.

But we will bring the matter still nearer home, and agree to have the point determined by every man's own experience. Let every one of us look back to the earliest period of his life, and see what have been his dispositions towards God. Did we, in proportion as our rational powers were expanded, employ them in the contemplation of God as our Creator, our Benefactor, our Redeemer, and our Judge? Have we felt an unfeigned solicitude to please him, and to glorify his name? Has every thing that is contrary to his will been hateful in our eyes, and has it been shunned by us with abhorrence? Has it been our delight to draw nigh to him from day to day in the exercise of prayer and praise, and to implore help from him that we may mortify every corrupt affection, and be gradually transformed into his image in righteousness and true holiness? Nay, we will go no farther than this very day, and ask, Whether such were the exercises of our minds when we rose from our beds, and whether we find it an easy matter to preserve our minds in such a frame as this? Do we not find, that the things of time and sense thrust out all these holy affections, and that God, instead of being the one object before our eyes, is scarcely to be found in all our thoughts? I speak as to wise men, and to men of integrity; Declare the truth before God: Say whether or not ye yourselves are fallen from God? Say whether piety be the natural produce of your souls? Say whether you find holy and heavenly thoughts, or carnal and earthly thoughts, have the readier entertainment in your minds? Say whether or not ye are impotent to good; or go and try it when you leave this place: Go, and say with yourselves, "I will bring my own mind to a state of deep humiliation for my past sins; I will exercise lively gratitude to God for his sparing mercy hitherto; I will look with stedfast faith to Christ as my only and all-sufficient Saviour; and I will rejoice and delight in him as my present portion, and my eternal great reward." Do this; do it, not for a constancy, but only for the remainder of this day; and then will we confess, that

all

all that we have spoken is a libel upon human nature, and that man is neither so corrupt nor so helpless as the Scriptures and the writings of our Reformers have represented him. Whatever may be thought of all our preceding observations, it must surely be acknowledged fair, when we leave every man to be his own accuser, and constitute him judge in his own cause. I repeat it; this is the tribunal to which we make our appeal, and by your own impartial judgment we will venture to abide.

Anticipating your decision, (for we doubt not but that the faithful monitor within you has already pronounced it,) we ground on your own acknowledgements a word of exhortation.

First, if we are such corrupt and helpless creatures, let us seek to obtain a deep and abiding sense of our wretched condition. What ought we to feel, who have lived as without God in the world, who have exalted to his throne all the vanities of time and sense, and have, in fact, been a god unto ourselves, doing our own will, finding our own pleasure, and seeking our own glory? What, I say, ought such persons to feel? What view ought they to have of their own conduct? Is it a small measure of humiliation and contrition that befits such persons? Take into the account also what blessings that God, whom we have so neglected, has from time to time been pouring out upon us; and let us reflect, above all, on his incomprehensible love in giving his only-begotten Son to die for us, and in following us incessantly with offers of a free and full salvation through him: think, moreover, of the strivings of his Holy Spirit with us from time to time, and of the resistance which we have opposed to his sacred motions; reflect, I say, on these things, and then say, Whether our eyes ought not to be a fountain of tears to run down night and day for all our iniquities and abominations. Indeed it is not a mere sigh that the occasion calls for; nor is it a few heartless acknowledgements that will suffice: the very best of us has need to smite on his breast with anguish of heart, and to cry from his inmost soul, God be merciful to me a sinner! Nothing less than this will in any respect answer the demands of our offended God: it is the

the broken and contrite spirit alone which he will not despise. O let us seek to humble ourselves aright! let us implore help from God, who alone can take away the heart of stone, and give us a heart of flesh: let us look to Jesus our ascended Saviour, who is exalted to give repentance as well as remission of sins; and let us intreat of him so to discover to us the enormity of our guilt, that we may mourn and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.

In the next place, if such be our guilt and helplessness, let us not humble ourselves for it, but seek for the remission of our sins in Jesus' blood. O, thanks be to God! "there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness:" there is a Saviour, "whose blood will cleanse from all sin," and "who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." He has made reconciliation for us through the blood of his cross; and through his sacrifice and intercession we may yet find acceptance with our offended God. In his righteousness we may be clothed; and, arrayed in that, we shall stand before God "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, yea, holy, and without blemish." We do indeed, in the first place, urge the necessity of repentance; but no man must rest in his repentance, however deep it may be: the offender, under the law, not only confessed his sins over his sacrifice, but laid them upon the head of the victim. So must we do: we must transfer all our sins to the head of our great Sacrifice; and he, like the scape-goat, will carry them all away to the land of oblivion.

Lastly; Let us seek to be renewed in our hearts by the influence of the Holy Spirit. He is justly called in our Catechism, "the Sanctifier of all the elect people of God." It is he who must "give us both to will and to do;" and, if we set ourselves in earnest to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling;" we need not fear but that he will help our infirmities, and that his grace shall be sufficient for us. Polluted as we are, we should yet be sanctified throughout in body, soul, and spirit, if only we would plead in earnest for his renewing influence: and, helpless as we are, we should yet be strengthened with

might by his agency in our inward man, and be enabled to do all things through his gracious communications.

This is the true use of Christian principles. To acknowledge the extent of our fall, is of no use, unless we seek for a recovery through the sacrifice of our Redeemer, and through the influences of the Eternal Spirit. Let us but apply these remedies; and all aversion to see the depth of our guilt and misery will vanish instantly. We shall be in no fear of being too much depressed by a sense of our sin; but shall rather desire to know the full extent of our malady, that God may be the more glorified in our restoration to health. And if indeed we are disposed to implore help from God, then may we profitably sum up our requests in the words of that truly scriptural Collect, "Grant to us, Lord, we beseech thee, the Spirit to think, and do always such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do any thing that is good without thee, may, by thee, be enabled to live according to thy will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen[a]."

[a] Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

DCCCCLXVI.

ON THE NEW BIRTH.

1 Cor. x. 15. *I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.*

THE subject to which we would now draw your attention, and which is most intimately connected with that of our fallen state, and of our depravity by nature, is the Doctrine of the New Birth. It has been already shewn, that we are altogether born in sin, and corrupt in all our faculties; and it is obvious, that a great change must pass upon our souls before we can be meet for the enjoyment of those heavenly mansions, where no unclean thing can enter.

In order to invalidate this doctrine, occasion has been taken from the use of the word παλιγγενεσία, which we translate regeneration, to confound this doctrine with baptism. The argument used is this: The word παλιγγενεσία occurs but twice in the Scriptures, and neither time has it any thing to do with that spiritual change

change which enthusiasts insist upon as necessary to our salvation. One of the times it is used in reference to Baptism, and is expressly distinguished from the renewing of the Holy Ghost; as when it is said (Tit. iii. 5.), "God hath saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost:" and the other time, it has nothing to do either with baptism or the new birth, but refers to a totally distinct subject.

Now we grant, that this particular term, "the washing of regeneration," is here used as our objector states: and we also grant, that if nothing more were said in Scripture respecting a new birth than what is expressed under that particular term, there would be very great weight in the objection. But the doctrine of the new birth is not at all founded on the use of that particular term. The term regeneration, indeed, has a peculiar fitness to express the being *born again:* and when it is so peculiarly fit for this purpose, we cannot but think that the non-application of it to the subject in the Holy Scriptures, would be a very weak argument against the doctrine itself, when that doctrine is expressed as clearly as possible by various other terms of the same import. However, we wish not to contend about a *word:* it is not *words*, but *things*, that we insist upon; and therefore, waving the use of that particular term, we shall speak in the common phraseology of Scripture, of being "born again," or "born from above," or "born of God."

But that we may leave no room for misapprehension respecting our sentiments, we shall begin with stating what we do *not* mean, when we insist upon the doctrine of the New Birth.

It is supposed by many, and indeed affirmed by some, that we require a *sudden* impulse of the Holy Spirit, which, *without any co-operation on the part of man*, is to convert the soul to God; and that we require this change to be so *sensibly and perceptibly* wrought, that the subject of it shall be able to specify the day and hour when it took place.

But all this we utterly disclaim. We say, indeed, that God *may* effect his work in any way that he pleases; and that, if he choose to convert men now, precisely as he did

did the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, or as he did the persecuting Saul on his way to Damascus, he is at liberty to do it; and no man in the universe is authorised to say that he *cannot*, or *shall* not, or *will* not, do it. But we never require any thing of the kind: we require nothing *sudden*. It may be so gradual, as that the growth of it, like the seed in the parable, shall at no time be particularly visible, either to the observation of others, or to the person's own mind: "it shall spring and grow up he knoweth not how[a]." We deny that we ever speak of it as wrought by an *irresistible* impulse of the Spirit, or without the co-operation of the man himself: for that man is in all cases a free agent: he is never wrought upon as a mere machine. He is drawn, indeed, but it is with the *cords of a man*; that is, by considerations proper to influence a rational being, and by feelings which those considerations excite in his soul. He is influenced by hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, just as any other man is; only the Spirit of God takes away from his heart that veil which was upon it (and thereby enables the man to see both temporal and eternal things in their true light, according to their relative importance); and then inclines the heart to act agreeably to the dictates of sound judgment. *How far* the Spirit of God works, and *how far* the mind of man, is a point which no human being can determine; but that "God gives us both to will and to do," we are certain, since "every good and perfect gift cometh down from him." But at the same time we know, that man *does* and *must* "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling;" and so far is the Divine agency from being a reason for neglect on man's part, that it is the great motive and encouragement which God himself affords him to activity and exertion[b].

Thus we have endeavoured to guard against the misrepresentations with which this subject is usually disguised and deformed.

We now come to state what our views of the subject really are:—

We have before shewn, that man by nature has nothing in

[a] Mark iv. 27. [b] Phil. ii. 12, 13.

in him that is *spiritually* good, or good *towards God.* But in order to be made meet for heaven, he must be made spiritually good; that is, he must love what God loves, and hate what God hates; and be, and do, what God commands. Does God hate sin in all its branches? he must hate it too, and lothe and abhor himself for having ever committed it. Does God love holiness? he also must love a holy God, and holy exercises, and holy affections; and must so love holy things, as to make them the continual objects of his most earnest pursuit: in relation to every thing that is holy and heavenly, "the same mind must be in him that was in Christ Jesus." Has God required him to come as a weary and heavy-laden sinner to Jesus, and to live altogether by faith in Christ, for wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; and to glory, not in any human strength or goodness, but wholly and exclusively in the Lord Jesus Christ? the man's mind must be brought to this, and Christ must be exceeding precious to him in all these points of view; yea, he must "determine to know nothing, and to rejoice in nothing, but Christ and him crucified." These views and these principles must not rest as mere notions in the head, but must be wrought into the heart, and exhibited in the whole of the life and conversation.

Before we proceed, we will beg leave to ask, Is this, or is it not, a reasonable statement and a reasonable requirement? I speak as unto wise men; and I call upon you to judge, as in the sight of God, whether these requirements can justly be branded with enthusiasm, or severity, or any odious character whatever?

But to proceed:—This change far exceeds the power of fallen man. Whatever powers you may be pleased to invest him with, they fall very far short of this. A semblance of these things he may put on; but he cannot form them really and truly in his heart. This is the work of the Spirit of God, who is promised to us for this very end: "A new heart will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stoney heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh: and I will put MY SPIRIT within you, and cause you to walk in my Statutes, and ye shall keep

keep my Commandments to do them[c]." As to the mode of effecting this great work, we have already observed, the Spirit is not restricted: but whenever it is truly effected, then we say, that the man is born again, and born of the Spirit; and the change that has taken place within him, we call the New Birth.

Now the question is, Whether this be the new birth or not? and whether we do right in insisting upon it as necessary to man's salvation?

In answer to this, we reply, not only that the Scriptures call this a new birth, a new creation, a being born of God, and a being born of the Spirit, but that an experience of it is predicated of all who are in a state of favour with God now, or shall find admission into his kingdom hereafter. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, or a new creation," says the Apostle: "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new[d]." And our Lord, with repeated asseverations, says to Nicodemus, "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*[e]."

These declarations of our Lord to Nicodemus are peculiarly strong; because the import of them cannot with any appearance of reason be explained away. Some indeed have endeavoured to explain this of baptism; but I wish that those, who think it can bear that construction, would see what sense they can on that supposition make of the whole context. Let us suppose for a moment that baptism is the new birth, and that baptism was the point which our Lord so strongly insisted on; Why should our Lord, when explaining and enforcing his first assertion, so carefully distinguish between water-baptism and the operations of the Holy Spirit; "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water *and of the spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God?" Here, admitting that he insisted on the necessity of being born of water, he insisted also on being born of the Spirit, in order that he might convince Nicodemus that he spoke, not of an outward and carnal, but of an inward and spiritual, change.

Again;

[c] Ezek. xxxvi, 26, 27. [d] 2 Cor. v. 17. [e] John iii. 3—5.

Again—How can his subsequent explanations apply to baptism? On the supposition that he speaks of a spiritual birth, his reasons are clear and forcible; "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh;" and therefore unfit for a spiritual kingdom: but "that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," and exactly suited to that kingdom which he was about to establish. Again—If it were baptism of which he speaks, what connexion has that with the wind, which bloweth where it listeth, and which, though inexplicable in some respects, is invariably and infallibly to be seen in its effects? If it were baptism, it would blow, not where the Spirit listeth, but where the parents and the Minister list: and as for its effects, they are for the most part visible to no human being. Moreover, how could our Lord with justice ask Nicodemus, "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" Nicodemus might have well replied, "Yes, I am a master in Israel, and yet know not these things; for how should I know them? Where are they revealed? What is there in the writings of Moses or the Prophets that should have taught me to expect so much from baptism? God required the circumcision of the flesh, as you do baptism; but he required the circumcision of the heart also: and if there be a spiritual change of a similar nature required of us under your dispensation, and that be the thing which you call a new birth, then I confess I ought to have had clearer views of these things, since they were evidently inculcated in the Jewish Scriptures, and were represented also as particularly characterizing the Messiah's reign."

It were much to be wished, that those who will have baptism to be the new birth would take this passage, and try what sense they can make of it according to their interpretation. Prejudice doubtless is so strong as to be convinced by nothing; but I should marvel if a person, possessed of a simple and unsophisticated mind, could withstand the evidence that would arise from this one passage alone.

But as some distinguished characters are very strong and positive upon this point, we think it not improper to enter somewhat more fully into it.

That

That we may not be misunderstood either in relation to what we conceive to be their sentiments, or what we would maintain in opposition to them, we will state precisely what it is in their views which we disapprove, and which we conceive it is of great importance to correct.

If by the term regeneration they meant an introduction into a new *state*, in which the baptized persons have a right and title to all the blessings of salvation, we should have no controversy with them.

If they meant that all adults, who in the exercise of penitence and faith are baptized into Christ, have in that ordinance the remission of their sins sealed to them, and the Holy Spirit in a more abundant measure communicated to them, we should not disagree with them.

If they meant that infants dedicated to God in baptism *may* and sometimes *do* (though in a way not discoverable by us, except by the fruits) receive a new nature from the Spirit of God *in*, and *with*, and *by* that ordinance, we could cordially join with them.

But they go much farther than all this; and assert, that *all persons* do *necessarily* by a Divine appointment receive the Holy Ghost in such a manner and degree as really to be changed in the spirit of their minds into the very image of God in righteousness and true holiness, and so to partake of the Divine nature, that they never need afterwards to seek so great a change again. *This* we are constrained to combat as a fundamental error: and respecting it, we now, in humility and a spirit of love, venture to make our appeal to you.

Is the new birth so identified with baptism as to be universally and necessarily attendant on it?

To determine this question, let us examine what is said of the *new birth* in Scripture, and what of *baptism*.

Hear what is said of *the new birth*: "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world." "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

Strong as this is, the same is yet more confidently expressed in another place: "We *know*, that whosoever is

is born of God, sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not[f]." Now we ask, Is this true of all that are baptized? Do they invariably, from the moment of their baptism, overcome the world? Do they nev (willingly and habitually) commit sin? and are they incapable of so sinning because they are baptized? Do they so keep themselves, that the wicked one toucheth them not? I speak as to wise and candid, yea, as to honest, men; and ask, Whether in your consciences you can affirm such things of baptism; and, Whether, if you cannot, the new birth must not be a thing very different from baptism? I will even abide by the testimony which every individual must give of himself: *You* have all been baptized: but have you all overcome the world? Are you all in such a state that you cannot knowingly and habitually commit sin? And have you so kept yourselves, that the wicked one does not touch you? Was there ever such a period in your lives?: If there was, when was it? How long did it last? Why did you not continue it? Why are you not panting after it, and labouring for it again? But you know in your own hearts that there are millions of baptized persons of whom these things are not true, nor ever were true; and that consequently the new birth must be a very different thing from baptism.

Now then let us inquire also what is said of *baptism*. It is said, "Our Lord baptized no man."—But was he not the means of any being born to God? It is said by Paul, that "God did not send him to baptize, but to preach the Gospel:" but was not he sent to beget souls to God through the Gospel? He goes further, and says, "I thank God I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius." But would he have accounted it a proper ground of thanksgiving, if he had been instrumental to the conversion of no more than these? He tells us of *many* whom he had begotten by the Gospel, and who were his sons in the faith; and therefore we are sure, that there is a birth effected by the Word and Spirit of God, that is totally distinct from baptism.

How can we account for it, that men, in the face of all this

[f] 1 John v. 18.

this evidence, should maintain, as they do, this fatal error? In some cases it is to be feared, that, being averse to seek the spiritual change of which the Scriptures speak, they are glad to lay hold on any error that shall lull their consciences asleep, and sanction their continuance in an unconverted state. 'But with some we hope, that there is really an error of judgment arising from the strong things which are spoken of baptism in the holy Scriptures. They do not consider, that, when it is said, "Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins;" those words were addressed to adults, who had just been informed, that Jesus was the Christ, and that, if they believed in him, and became his disciples, their sins should be blotted out. Expressions of this kind were highly proper as addressed to adults; but afford no ground for the idea, that the rite of baptism is the new birth. We are no more disposed to detract from the honour of that sacred ordinance than our adversaries themselves: we admit, and beg you to bear in mind our admission, that great, exceeding great, benefit accrues to the soul from baptism. In many instances, where the ordinance is really attended upon in faith, and prayer is offered up to God in faith, we do believe that God bestows a peculiar blessing on the child: and, though we cannot ascertain that he does so but by the fruits that are afterwards produced, yet are we warranted from Scripture to believe, that the effectual fervent prayer of righteous people shall not go forth in vain; and that "whatsoever we ask, believing, we shall receive." But even from the ordinance itself we may consider great good as arising to the soul; since, as in the case of circumcision, the person is thereby brought into covenant with God. The Israelites, as a nation in covenant with God, were highly privileged: for "to them," as the Apostle says, "belonged the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises[g]." The same, I doubt not, may be justly said of all that are baptized: indeed, we doubt not, but that our reformers had that very passage of Scripture in their eye, when in our baptismal service

[g] Rom. ix. 4.

service they instructed us to thank God for having regenerated the baptized person by his Holy Spirit; and, in our Catechism, to speak of children as by the ordinance of baptism made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. These expressions are doubtless strong; and so are St. Paul's expressions respecting the benefits of circumcision: and every blessing which he asserts to have been conveyed by circumcision, we may safely and truly apply to baptism. By the very admission of persons into covenant with God, they are brought into a *new state*, and have *a right and title* to all these privileges; and by the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ they come to the actual possession of them.

We hope we shall not be considered as degrading our subject, if we attempt to present it more clearly to your minds, by an easy and familiar illustration. The subject is confessedly difficult; and if we can by any means simplify it, we shall render an important service to those who wish to understand it. Take then a well-known ordinance from the laws of our own land. A person, to whom property has been bequeathed, has a right and title to it from the moment of the testator's death; but he cannot take possession, and have the full enjoyment of it, till he has complied with the due forms and requisitions of the law: so a baptized person has a right and title to all the blessings of the Christian covenant as soon as he is baptized; but he must comply with the requisitions of the Gospel, and exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, before he can have the complete enjoyment of them. We do not mean to lay any great stress on this illustration; we are aware it is far from complete; and we particularly desire that it may not be pressed beyond the occasion for which it is used; but we conceive that, imperfect as it is, it may serve to throw some light upon a subject, which has been, and yet is, a source of perplexity to many.

But the chief source of the forementioned error is, that men do not distinguish between a change of *state* and a change of *nature*. Baptism is, as we have just shewn,

shewn, a change of *state*: for by it we become entitled to all the blessings of the new covenant; but it is not a change of *nature*. A change of nature *may* be communicated at the time that that ordinance is administered; but the ordinance itself does not communicate it now, any more than in the Apostolic age. Simon Magus was baptized; and yet remained in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, as much after his baptism as he was before. And so it may be with us: And this is an infallible proof, that the change, which the Scriptures call the new birth, does not always and of necessity accompany this sacred ordinance. As the circumcision of the heart did not always accompany the circumcision of the flesh, so neither does the renovation of the soul always accompany the outward rite of baptism, which shadows it forth; and if only our opponents will distinguish the sign from the thing signified, and assign to each its proper place and office, there will be an immediate end of this controversy.

But it will not be amiss to examine briefly the different tendencies of these opposite doctrines, and to ascertain their comparative worth; in point of *sobriety*; in point of *practical efficacy*; and, lastly, in reference to their *final issue*.

Which has the preference in point of *sobriety*; The doctrine of a new and spiritual birth, by the operation of the Spirit of God; or that of baptism being the new birth? It is objected to the former doctrine, that it is enthusiastic, and that it is accompanied with many absurd and baneful errors; namely, that its advocates insist on sudden impulses, which irresistibly, and without any co-operation on our parts, at some particular time that may at all subsequent periods be referred to, convert the soul to God. Now we have before denied that the advocates for the new birth give any such representation of it, or that it is in its own nature associated with any such things. But now observe the doctrine of our adversaries; namely, of those who identify baptism with the new birth: it is curious to observe to what an extent they fall into the very errors which

which they impute to us. They say, that we are born again in baptism, consequently, they,

First, make our new birth *sudden.*

Next, they make it *irresistible;* for the child cannot withstand the power of the priest.

Next, they make it *without any co-operation on our part;* for the child is wholly passive.

Next, they make it *arbitrary according to the will of man;* who may hasten it, or delay it, or prevent it, exactly as he pleases: whereas it is expressly said of all Christians, That they are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God[h]."

Next, they make it so *determinable in point of time,* that not the person himself only, but the whole world also, may know it, by consulting the register where the ceremony is recorded.

And, lastly, they are *assured of it, not only without any evidence at all, but in the very face of all imaginable evidence to the contrary.*

Who, I would ask, are the enthusiasts now? I will further ask, Whether the wildest fanatic that can be found at this day in Christendom entertains notions half so fanatical as these?

The Jews laid great and unscriptural stress on Circumcision: but did they ever say that the circumcision of the flesh was the same as the circumcision of the heart? Or do our advocates for baptismal regeneration give credit either to the ancient or modern Jews, as actually born again by the rite of circumcision? The Jews did indeed think that all the circumcised among them would be saved; but it was on other grounds: it was from an idea that, as children of Abraham, they could not perish, being all of necessity interested in the covenant made with him and his seed: but never, as far as we know, did they so confound the sign with the thing signified, as to imagine, that they were of necessity made new creatures by the operation of God upon their souls, at the time that man performed a painful operation on their bodies.

But let us also examine the two opinions in reference to their *practical efficacy.* What is the tendency of the doctrine

[h] John i. 13.

doctrine which requires men to seek from God an entire change both of heart and life; and declares them to be incapable of entering into the kingdom of heaven till they have experienced this change? Its tendency manifestly is to awaken men from their slumbers in the way of sin, and to stir them up to seek a conformity to God in righteousness and true holiness. But what is the tendency of the doctrine that identifies baptism with the new birth? Is it not to lull men asleep in their evil ways; to make them think that they do not need a new nature, but only a little reformation of some things, which may easily be amended whenever they please? I ask any candid man, Are not these the true and natural tendencies of the two opposite doctrines? and do not these tendencies strongly mark which of the two is right?

Lastly; Let us view them in reference to their *final issue*.—Suppose that the doctrine of baptismal regeneration should prove erroneous, what will be the consequence to those who, having relied upon it as true, have never sought that spiritual birth which we maintain to be necessary to salvation? According to their own principles, they must perish: for, let it be remembered, that our opponents maintain the necessity of a new birth as well as we; only they maintain that they experienced it in their baptism. But suppose that our doctrine prove erroneous, shall we perish because we were fearful that we had not yet attained that new birth, and continued with all diligence to seek it after we had actually attained it? The worst that could in that case be said, would be, that we had given ourselves some unnecessary concern and trouble: but our very opponents must acknowledge, that by that diligence we had "made our calling and election sure;" yea, if I may be allowed such an expression, we had made it *doubly* sure. Can any one who considers this, sit down contentedly with the doubtful notion of having been regenerated in his baptism, and not exert himself to put the matter beyond a doubt? The pains used to obtain a new and spiritual birth will injure no man: but a neglect to seek it, from the idea of its having been imparted in baptism, will, if that idea

be

be erroneous, plunge us into irremediable and endless misery. Which alternative, then, will any man of wisdom, yea, of common prudence, choose?

I think, enough has been said to shew what the new birth really is, and that it must be sought and experienced by all who would find admittance into the kingdom of heaven.

But we will yet further confirm what has been said, by two or three passages of Scripture, which bear directly upon the question, and shew us the danger of listening to such delusions as are set in opposition to the truth which we are insisting on. "All are not Israel," says St. Paul, "who are of Israel[i];" or in other words, all are not true Christians who are nominally so. Again, "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature[k]." Here substitute the term baptism for the corresponding rite of circumcision, and you have in one single sentence every word that we have spoken. Once more: "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God[l]." Can there be plainer language than this? O that we may not trifle with God, and our own souls! It is an easy matter to adopt an opinion, and to maintain it in opposition to the most convincing statements: but we cannot change the truth of God; nor, when we have passed into the eternal world, can we come back to rectify our errors. We may laugh at the new birth, and persuade ourselves that we have no need to be alarmed at the declarations of the Lord Jesus Christ in relation to it; but we cannot make him open the kingdom of heaven to us when once the door is shut: we may knock, and say, Lord, I thought my baptism was sufficient: but he will say, 'Depart, I never knew you: My words were plain enough, if you had desired to understand them; but you did not choose to let go your beloved lusts; you did not choose to give yourselves up to me in newness of heart and life; and

[i] Rom. ix. 6. [k] Gal. vi. 15. [l] Rom. ii. 28, 29.

and therefore you would "believe any lie" rather than comply with my word: Depart, therefore, and reap for ever the fruit of your own delusions.'

And now let me once more appeal to you as men of wisdom and integrity, whether your own experience does not confirm every word that I have spoken? Are not many of you sensible, that, notwithstanding your baptism, you have never been so born again, as to be brought out of darkness into light, and to be turned from the power of Satan unto God? Are you not sensible at this very hour, that it is not the one labour of your souls to walk as Christ walked, and to obtain an entire renovation of your souls after the divine image? In a word, Do you not find the current of your affections still running, agreeably to the bias of your corrupt nature, after the things of time and sense, instead of flowing, contrary to nature, upwards to high and heavenly things? If so, the point is clear: you have an evidence within yourselves where the truth lies. *Notwithstanding* your baptism, you are yet unrenewed; you are yet in your sins; and you are lost for ever, if you die in your present state. O cry mightily to God for the gift of his Holy Spirit, and for the influence of his converting grace! Pray, as David did, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Then shall you know by your own happy experience, what it is to be born again; and in due time shall you be partakers of the inheritance to which you are born, even "that inheritance, which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

DCCCCLXVII.

ON JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

1 Cor. x. 15. *I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.*

IF there be any one question of more importance than all others, it is this, "How shall a man be just with God?" Many errors in relation to other points may be entertained in the mind, and yet our final salvation not be affected by them: but an error in reference

ence to this undermines the foundation of our hopes, and will involve our souls in everlasting ruin. We are anxious therefore to state, with all the precision in our power, what we apprehend to be the doctrine of the holy Scriptures respecting the grounds of a sinner's acceptance before God. And here we are peculiarly solicitous to bespeak your candour; because there are in the world so many misconceptions, not to say, misrepresentations also, of the views of those who maintain the doctrine of justification by faith only.

It is thought by some, that we make faith to consist in a strong persuasion of the mind that we are in the favour of God: but we are far from entertaining any such opinion. Whatever is founded on a mere persuasion of our own minds, is a baseless fabric, a fatal delusion. The only warrant for a sinner's hope, is the written word of God: and that word is the same, whether it come suddenly to our minds, and excite in us an assurance of our interest in it, or be brought more gradually to our view, and be received with fear and trembling. The promises made to repenting and believing sinners are, I say, independent of any frames or feelings of ours; and are the only legitimate ground of our hope in God: and a simple reliance on them, and on Christ as revealed in them, we call *faith*.

What we mean by being *justified* by faith, we shall also explain in few words.

We all, as sinners, are obnoxious to the wrath of God; but the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth in the Gospel, as having by his own obedience unto death obtained eternal redemption for us. To him we are commanded to look as to the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; and we are assured, that, on our doing this with penitence and faith, "we shall be justified *from* all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." With this command we comply: we look to God as reconciled to us in the Son of his love; and in the exercise of this faith we become interested in all that Christ has done and suffered for us. Our iniquities are blotted out as a morning cloud; the righteousness of Christ is given to us,

and put upon us; and, arrayed in that spotless robe, we stand before God without spot or blemish. Thus are we accepted in the Beloved, or, in other words, are justified by faith.

We will also add a few words, to declare what we mean when we say, that we are justified by faith *without works*. We do not mean that a justified person is at liberty to neglect good works; but that the person who seeks for acceptance through Christ must not bring with him any works whatever, either ceremonial or moral, as a joint ground of his hope, or as a price which he is to pay for an interest in Christ. He must, *in point of dependence*, renounce his best works as much as the greatest sins he ever committed: his trust must be altogether in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here it will be proper just to mention a mistake which some have fallen into, respecting the works which are so carefully excluded by St. Paul from the office of justifying: It is said, that wherever works are mentioned as not justifying the sinner, the expression used is, "*The works of the law:*" and that therefore we may conclude, that not works in *general* are excluded from this office, but only the works of the *ceremonial law*. But the truth is, that "works" are *often* mentioned in this view, without any notice of the law; and the inference drawn from this unfounded assertion only shews, how hard the adversaries of the doctrine we are insisting upon find it to reconcile their opinions, in any plausible manner, with the statements of St. Paul. Let one passage suffice to settle this point. It is said (where the point in question is expressly debated), "If Abraham were justified by *works*, he hath whereof to glory." But what works could the Apostle mean? Those of the ceremonial law? The ceremonial law was not promulgated till four hundred and thirty years after the time that Abraham was justified; and, consequently, the works which are spoken of as incapable of justifying him, were not those of the ceremonial law, but works *generally*, of any kind whatever.

To

To make known our views, then, in few words: We consider justification as an act of sovereign grace and mercy, vouchsafed to sinners, on account of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done and suffered for them, and in no respect on account of their own merits or deserts; and it is solely through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, that we do, or ever can, obtain this mercy at God's hands.

Now, then, the question is, whether this be the doctrine of the holy Scriptures, or not.

Let us then address ourselves to this important subject, and make our appeal to you, as men of wisdom and of judgment, to determine, whether or not our statements be right, and whether they be of such fundamental importance as we profess them to be.

But here it may be thought that we shall merely bring forward some passages of St. Paul's writings, which may be differently interpreted; and that, after all, the question will remain where we found it. But this shall not be our mode of proceeding. If the point be as we maintain, we may expect that it will run, like the warp, throughout the whole Scriptures, and not depend upon any particular expressions that may here and there be interwoven with it by one favourite author. We will take then, but with all possible brevity, a comprehensive view of the subject; and will inquire—

I. What is the true way of salvation? and

II. What evidence we have that this is the only true way?

Under the former of these heads we will distinctly examine, What was the way of salvation dictated by the moral law? what by the ceremonial law? what was proclaimed by the Prophets? what by our Lord Jesus Christ himself? and what was maintained by his Apostles? what was the way in which the most eminent saints of old were justified? and what is the way marked out in the authentic records of our Church? Of course, on these several points we must be very concise:

concise; but we hope, nevertheless, to be clear and satisfactory.

What, then, was the way of salvation to which *the moral law* directed us? Our adversary will here exultingly reply, "by works." True, as given unto man *in innocence*, it did say, "Do this, and live." But what does it say to *fallen* man? Does it encourage him to hope for salvation by his obedience to it? Hear what it says to all who are under it: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Does this afford us any encouragement to seek salvation by our works? Our obedience must have been absolutely perfect from the first moment to the latest hour of our lives, or else the law, instead of promising any reward, denounces a curse against us; and on this account it is said by infallible authority, that "as many as are under the law, are under the curse." Is it asked, Why then was it promulgated in so solemn a manner on Mount Sinai? I answer, To shew us how awfully sin abounded in the world, and how much we stood in need of a Saviour; and thus to "shut us up to the faith that should afterwards be revealed," and to constrain us to seek for salvation by faith alone. This is what we are expressly told by an inspired Apostle: "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added, Because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid! for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law: but the Scripture hath concluded (hath *shut up*) all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to all that believe. Wherefore *the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith*[a]."

Next, let us hear the *ceremonial law*. In all the burnt-offerings, and the peace-offerings, and the sin-offerings, a fundamental part of the institution was, that the person who brought the offering should put his

[a] Gal. iii. 19—24.

his hand on the head of the victim; in token that he transferred all his sins to it; and then, when the sacrifice was slain, and its blood sprinkled according to the commandment, the offender was liberated from the sin that he had committed[b]. But we will direct your attention to the offerings which were annually made for the sins of all Israel, on the great day of atonement. Two goats were taken: one was to be slain for a sin-offering for the whole people of Israel, and its blood was to be carried within the vail, and sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat. Then the live goat was brought forth, and the high priest was to lay both his hands upon his head, and to confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat: and then the goat was to be led away by the hand of a fit man into the Wilderness, bearing upon him all their iniquities, unto a land not inhabited[c]. Can any thing be conceived more plain and simple than this? Who does not see that the sins of the people were expiated by the blood of the one, and carried away in consequence of their having been transferred to the other? Who does not here see written, as with a sun-beam, the truth it typified; namely, that "Christ died for our offences, and was raised again for our justification;" and that we are saved entirely by the exercise of faith in him, or, in other words, by transferring our guilt to him, and looking for mercy through his all-atoning sacrifice? Verily, if we make no better use of the explanations given us in the New Testament than to refine, and cavil, and obscure the truth, we had better go at once, and learn of a poor ignorant Jew: for there was no Jew so ignorant, but, when he saw that rite performed, could tell you in what way his iniquities were to be forgiven. And, if only we will bear in mind that ordinance, we may defy all the sophists upon earth: for it speaks the truth so plainly, that "he who runs may read it."

Turn we to the *Prophets:* They bear one uniform testimony

[b] Lev. i. ii. iii. [c] Lev. xvi. 15, 21, 22.

testimony to the truth we are proclaiming. Through fear of detaining you too long, we will wave the mention of any particular passages; because, if we believe the declaration of God himself, their testimony is all summed up in one infallible declaration: "To him give *all the Prophets* witness, that, through his name, whosoever *believeth in him* shall receive remission of sins[d]."

Our blessed Lord invariably declared, that his blood should be shed for the remission of sins, and that in no other way than by faith in him could any Child of man be saved. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me[e]." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the Wilderness, even so shall the Son of man be lifted up; that *whosoever believeth in him* should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that *believeth on him*, is not condemned; but he that *believeth not*, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God[f]." If it be said, that, in answer to one who inquired, "What shall I *do* to inherit eternal life?" he replied, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;" we answer, he did so: and we highly disapprove of that mode which some take of evading the force of his words, by saying that he spoke them ironically. We are persuaded that our Lord would not have indulged in irony or sarcasm on such an occasion, and least of all towards one whom "he loved[g]." The meaning of his answer was; "Come, and follow me in all that I command you, and you shall gradually be guided into all truth." And the command which he immediately gave the youth, to go and sell all that he had, and to look for treasure in heaven, put his sincerity to the trial, and shewed him, that, notwithstanding the anxiety he professed to learn the way to life, he was more attached to his wealth than to his Saviour and his God. When our blessed

[d] Acts x. 43. [e] John xiv. 6. [f] John iii. 14, 15, 16, 18.
[g] Compare Matt. xix. 16, 17. with Mark x. 18, 21.

blessed Lord more explicitly declared the way of salvation, he spoke of himself as having come into the world for the express purpose of giving up his life "a ransom for many[h]," and of giving men his own flesh to eat, and his blood to drink, for the life of their souls[i].

Of the views given by *the Apostles*, our opponents themselves have but little doubt; and hence, for the most part, the Epistles are no very favourite part of Scripture with them: and some will go so far as to say, that they think it would have been better if the Epistles of St. Paul had never been written.

But let us hear St. Peter on the day of Pentecost. When three thousand persons at once were crying out with great agony of mind, "Men, and Brethren, what shall we do?" his answer to them is, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins[k];" that is, 'Change your minds with respect to Him whom you have crucified as a malefactor; and, with deep contrition of heart for your rejection of him, look to him now as the only Saviour of your souls, and become his open followers in token of your faith in him.' The same Apostle, addressing the whole Jewish Sanhedrim, speaks thus of that Jesus whom they had crucified: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner: neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved[l]." Of St. Paul it is scarcely needful to speak. Only let a man, desirous of knowing the truth of God, read with an unprejudiced mind the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, and he could no more doubt what were St. Paul's sentiments, than he could doubt whether the sun shines at noonday. That a learned and ingenious man may involve the plainest subjects in obscurity, and may maintain even the most palpable absurdities with somewhat like a plausible course of argument, is well known to this audience, who are habituated to investigate theories of every

[h] Mark x. 45. [i] John vi. 52—58.
[k] Acts ii. 38. [l] Acts iv. 10—12.

every kind. But the Scriptures are written for the poor: and it is a fact, that the poor do understand them; whilst the vain disputers of this world are bewildered in their own mazes, and by the just judgment of God are "taken in their own craftiness[m]." But, that we may not seem as if we took St. Paul's testimony for granted, we will bring to your remembrance that answer which he gave to the jailor, when inquiring, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He replied to the same effect as Peter had done on the day of Pentecost, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved[n]."

We will mention also that striking reproof which he gave to Peter, for countenancing, by his dissimulation, the idea, that something besides faith in Christ was necessary to salvation; "We (we Jews, we Apostles,) knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified[o]."

Here perhaps it will be urged, that the testimony of St. James is altogether on the opposite side; for that he says, "We are justified by works, and not by faith only[p]." But if only we attend to the scope of St. James's argument, we shall see that he does not at all contradict St. Paul. St. James is writing to some who were disposed to abuse St. Paul's doctrine of justification by faith only; who "*said*, that they had faith[q]," but had no works to support their claim. These he tells, that their faith was dead, and no better than the faith of devils. He declares to them, that, as it would be to no purpose to profess compassion for a fellow-creature, when at the same time we made no effort to relieve his distress; so it is in vain to profess faith in Christ, if we shew not forth our faith by our works. Abraham and Rahab were believers; but they evidenced by their conduct, of what kind their faith was; namely, that it was not a dead and barren, but a lively and

[m] 1 Cor. i. 18—29. & iii. 18, 19. [n] Acts xvi. 30, 31.
[o] Gal. ii. 16. [p] Jam. ii. 24. [q] Jam. ii. 14—26.

and operative, faith. And we in like manner must give, by our works, an evidence that our faith is genuine: for in any pretensions which we make to a saving faith, it is by our works that we must be justified, (or proved upright,) and not by faith only. St. Paul, on the other hand, is arguing expressly on the subject of a sinner's justification before God; and he maintains that no man is, or can be, justified in any other way than by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Next, let us see what *the most eminent saints of old* found effectual for their salvation. And here the path is prepared for us by St. Paul, so that we need little more than quote his words. In the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where he is arguing this very point, he asks, "What shall we then say, that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? (*i. e.* hath found effectual for his justification?) for if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God;" (*i. e.* he has nothing whereof to glory before God.) For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt: But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness; even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God *imputeth righteousness without works*; saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man, to whom the Lord will not impute sin[r]." We regret that we have not time to make any observations upon this passage: but whoever will read it attentively will find, that every word we have uttered is confirmed by it, beyond the power of sophistry to set aside.

To Abraham and David under the Old Testament, we will add St. Paul under the New: and methinks, if *he* had no righteousness of his own wherein to trust, *we* cannot pretend to any. Hear, then, what he says respecting the grounds of his hope: "We desire to win

[r] Rom. iv. 1—8.

win Christ, and to be found in him, *not having our own righteousness*, which is of the law, but *the righteousness which is by the faith of Christ*, even the righteousness which is of God by faith[s]." Are we so much holier than he, that when he renounced all trust in his righteousness, we should make ours, either in whole or in part, the ground of our dependence? After all this, it is scarcely needful to refer to the avowed sentiments of *our Reformers*: indeed we have no time to do it at any length: we will content ourselves therefore with reciting to you the 11th Article of our Church: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith; and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are *justified by faith only*, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification."

We now come, in the Second place, to shew, that *this alone is the appointed way of acceptance with God.*— This part of our subject being of such vast importance, we must beg leave to enter into it somewhat minutely; and to shew, first, that *this alone accords with the character given of the true Gospel;* and, next, that *this alone is suited to our condition as fallen sinners.*

As to the marks which characterize the Gospel, one of peculiar importance is, that *it magnifies the grace of God.* We are told by St. Paul, that God gave his Gospel to us, "that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." And if we consider salvation as entirely by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the grace of God is indeed magnified beyond all the powers of language to express. The gift of God's only dear Son to die for us, the laying of all our iniquities on him, the accepting of his vicarious sacrifice in our behalf, the offering of a full salvation to all the sinners of mankind, on account of what he has done and suffered for us; a bestowing of this salvation freely, without money and without price, even upon the very chief

[s] Phil. iii. 8, 9.

chief of sinners—All this is such a stupendous work of grace, that it fills even heaven itself with wonder. But let man be required to purchase this salvation, either in whole or in part, by any works of his own; and who does not see how the grace of God is lowered? We will grant, for argument sake, that the giving of salvation on *any* terms, would have been a wonderful display of grace; but, as compared with that which is revealed, it would have been no grace. As the Apostle says of the Mosaic dispensation, that "notwithstanding it was made glorious, it had no glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth;" so we may say of such a mutilated Gospel as we are speaking of; It might be glorious, inasmuch as it would be an exercise of mercy; but it would have had no glory, by reason of the infinitely brighter display of Divine grace in the Gospel, as it is revealed to us. Indeed, St. Paul tells us, that if *any* thing were required on our part towards purchasing of salvation, salvation could be no longer of grace; because the two are contrary to, and absolutely inconsistent with, each other. "If," says he, "salvation be by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then is it no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work[t]." Hence he elsewhere says, "It is of faith, that it may be by grace:" and again, "Christ is become of no effect unto you; whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace[u]." This, then, is one evidence, that salvation must be by faith alone, without works.

Another most important mark of the true Gospel is, that it *cuts off all occasion for boasting*. God has said, that he has made Christ the great depository of all spiritual blessings, in order "that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that all might glory in the Lord alone[x]." And it is evident, that by the Gospel, as Paul preached it, all boasting is excluded.

But, suppose that our works in any measure whatever formed a ground of our justification before God; should we have no occasion for boasting then? Assuredly we should; for in proportion as we had procured it by our works, we might claim it as a debt, and say,

[t] Rom. xi. 6 [u] Gal. v. 4. [x] 1 Cor. i. 29, 31.

say, "I have procured this unto myself." It matters not in what degree this exists: if it exist in any degree whatever, boasting is not excluded. Even in heaven itself we might say, "I owe it not entirely to the free grace of God that I am here, but partly to my own superior merit." This is declared by St. Paul in very express terms: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith[y]:" that is, if it were in any degree, even the smallest that can be imagined, by works, there would be room for boasting; but seeing it is solely by faith in the Lord Jesus, all boasting is, and must for ever be, excluded. Hence, in giving an account of the Gospel salvation, he says, "By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast[z]." Let these words be remembered, "*Not of works, lest any man should boast;*" and there will be an end of all further argument on this subject.

One more mark of the Gospel salvation is, that it *secures the performance of good works*[a]. The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, teaches us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world[b]. Many are apt to imagine, that the doctrine of salvation by faith alone destroys all incentive to holiness, and tends to encourage all manner of licentiousness: this was the very objection which was urged against the Gospel in the Apostle's days, and which he set himself strongly to refute. Anticipating the objection, he says, "Shall we then continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" And again; "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! yea,

[y] Rom. iii. 27. [z] Eph. ii. 8, 9.

[a] Had there been a fifth Sunday in the month, this would have been made a distinct subject: but the whole being to be comprised in four Sermons, this part could not possibly be extended, or be rendered so prominent, as the Author wished. But what *is* here spoken is the most decided sentiment of his heart.

This want has since been supplied in a sermon, on Ps. cxix. 128. intitled, "The true test of Religion in the Soul."

[b] Tit. ii. 11, 12.

yea, we establish the law[c]." The fact is, that there is nothing so operative as a lively faith. What was the spring of all those glorious actions that were performed by the long catalogue of worthies mentioned in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews? From beginning to the end, we are told that faith was the principle by which they were actuated, and the root from which all their obedience sprang. Of the New-Testament saints, none exceeded, or even equalled, Paul: and what was it that actuated him? He tells us: "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again." This is the effect which faith will, according to its measure, produce in all. It will "work by love," and "overcome the world," and "purify the heart." What if the works it produces be not to be relied on for our justification before God? Is it nothing that they will be adduced in the day of judgment as the evidences of our love to Christ, and as the measure of our everlasting reward? Is it nothing that God is glorified by them, and that the dispositions from whence they spring constitute our meetness for the heavenly inheritance? Surely these are motives enough for the performance of them, without making them the meritorious cause of our salvation; and, if we look to fact and experience, who are the persons at this day that are accounted righteous overmuch, and are represented as making the way to heaven so strait that none but themselves can walk in it? Is it among the declaimers about good works, that we must look for these persons? No; but among those who renounce all dependence on their own works, and seek for salvation by Christ alone: a sure proof, that they who look for redemption solely through the blood of Christ, are by that very principle made "a peculiar people zealous of good works."

These, then, are clear evidences that the way of salvation is precisely such as we have declared it to be; for

[c] Rom. vi. 1, 2. & iii. 31.

for there is no other doctrine under heaven that has these marks connected with it, or these effects proceeding from it.

The second thing we mentioned as establishing our doctrine, was, that there is no other way of salvation *suited to our condition as fallen sinners.*

Take the way of salvation by *our own works*; who will venture to build his hopes on such a foundation as that? Who is not sensible that in many things he has offended God? For those offences he must answer at the judgment-seat of Christ. If throughout a great part of our life we had done all that was commanded us, we should still be unprofitable servants: our obedience to some commandments would make no atonement for our violation of others: for the sins that we had committed, we must die. But it may be said, that of those offences *we repent.* Be it so: still our tears can never wash out the guilt we have already contracted. Even in human governments, a criminal that is under sentence of death may be truly sorry that he has transgressed the laws, and may determine never to repeat his crimes any more; but these sorrows and resolutions will not avail to rescue him from death, or to repeal the sentence that is gone forth against him: much less can any repentance of ours remove the curses of God's holy law, or avert the judgments which our sins have merited.

But it may be said, we rely not on our works alone, nor on our repentance alone, but on *these things and Christ's merits united.* Go, then, and search the records of your life, and see what works you will bring forth in order to eke out the insufficient merits of your Saviour; bring forth one single work; one only out of your whole life; one that has no defect, and that does not in any respect need the mercy of God to pardon its imperfection: then carry it to God, and say, "Here, Lord, is a work in which thou thyself canst not find a flaw; it is as perfect as any that my Lord and Saviour himself ever performed, and is therefore worthy to be united to his infinitely meritorious obedience, as a joint ground of all my hopes: I am content

tent to stand or fall by this one work: I am aware, that if it is imperfect, it stands in need of mercy for its own imperfection, and consequently can never purchase pardon for all my other offences; but I ask no mercy for that, yea, rather, I claim on account of it all the glory of heaven[d]." You who will dispute against salvation by faith only, and who wish to have something of your own to found your hopes upon, do this: *bring forth* some work, some *one* work at least, that *shall stand the test of the Divine law*, and defy the scrutiny *of the heart-searching God*. But if you cannot find *one* such work, then see how unsuitable to your state is the doctrine for which you contend.

Perhaps it will be said, that God does not require of us imperfect creatures any thing that is *perfect*, but only that we be *sincere*. But who will venture to make his own sincerity the ground of his salvation? If this be the law by which we are to be tried, who shall stand? Who shall say, that from the earliest period of his life he has sincerely striven in *every* thing to please God, and to approve himself to God? Alas! those who stand upon their own sincerity are little aware of the deceitfulness and wickedness of their own hearts; and if they would but look back throughout their whole lives, they would find, that their sincerity, like that of Saul of Tarsus, has only stimulated them to a greater measure of inveteracy against the Gospel of Christ.

We will mention only one more refuge to which these persons will be disposed to flee, and that is, their *having done as well as they could*: "I have done as well as I could, and therefore I doubt not but that God will have mercy upon me." But in this we shall all fail, as much as in all the fallacious hopes that have preceded it. For, who has done as well as he could throughout his own life? Who will dare to appeal to God even respecting the best day in his life, that there was no one

[d] Let not the Reader suppose that any one is exhorted to go thus to Almighty God: the whole passage is intended to shew the horrible impiety of even entertaining such a thought. The Scriptures frequently put such language into *the lips* of sinners, in order to shew what is the real language of *their hearts*. See Rom. iii. 5, 7. & ix. 19.

one thing omitted which he might have done for him, nor any one thing done in a less perfect manner than it might have been done?

It is clear, that in all the ways of salvation which men devise for themselves, whether by good works, or repentance, or faith and works united, or sincerity, or doing as well as we can, there is not a spot of ground whereon to place our foot: we must go to the ark of God, and there only can we find rest to our weary souls.

Permit me, then, to address you as dying persons, and to ask, What you will think of these things when standing on the brink and precipice of eternity? Now you can speculate, and dispute, and speak with confidence about the justness of your views: now you can discuss these matters as if it were of little moment what your sentiments are, or what is the ground of your affiance. But if you hold fast any of the foregoing delusions, you will not find them so satisfactory in a dying hour as you now imagine. Doubts like these will arise in your mind; "What if my works should be found at last, either in number or quality, insufficient? What if my fancied goodness, which I am blending with my Redeemer's righteousness, should prove a refuge of lies?" Amongst the numberless evils to which this fatal error will expose you, is, that in that hour, when you will most need divine and heavenly consolation, your soul will be trembling with uncertainty as to the ground of your hopes, of those hopes which will in a little time be blasted or realized for ever. For, who shall tell you whether you have attained that precise measure of righteousness which God will accept? And what a fearful thing will it be to be going into the presence of your Judge, uncertain what shall be his sentence upon you, and whether heaven or hell shall be your everlasting portion! Would you but place yourselves,—where you must all very shortly be,—on a dying bed, we should not find it so difficult to convince you, that it is better to trust in the righteousness of Christ, which is commensurate with all the demands of law and justice, and adequate

to

to the wants of the whole world, than to be trusting in any respect to any poor defective righteousness of your own. Methinks this argument alone were sufficient to convince any considerate man: supposing that your own righteousness were sufficient, your Lord would not condemn you for thinking too humbly of it, and for relying solely on his all-atoning sacrifice; but supposing it insufficient, will he not condemn you for your pride and arrogance in trusting to it, and for your ingratitude in rejecting his salvation? Here all the declarations of his word are as pointed and clear as words can make them: "He that believeth on the Son hath life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him[e]." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned[f]." Both of these declarations were uttered by our blessed Lord himself when on earth; and he will not forget them, when he shall come again to judge the world.

May I not, then, make my appeal to you? "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say." Is it wise to turn your back upon righteousness, which, as a rock, is able to sustain a ruined world; and to be trusting in one that is no better than a foundation of sand? Know ye that your God is a jealous God: he will not give his glory to another: if ye will seek acceptance with him, through his only-begotten Son, "no one of you shall ever be cast out:" your sins shall be washed away in his blood; and your souls be clothed with the unspotted robe of his righteousness. Being justified by faith in him, you shall have peace with God: you shall "be kept also from falling," whilst in this ensnaring world; and in due time you shall be "presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for every one of you is, that you may be saved: but know assuredly, that there is no salvation for you but by faith in Christ: for "other foundation can no man lay than that

[e] John iii. 36. [f] Mark xvi. 16.

that is laid, which is Jesus Christ[g]." To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be glory in the Church throughout all ages, world without end: Amen.

[g] 1 Cor. iii. 11.

DCCCCLXVIII.

NO KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST BUT BY THE SPIRIT.

1 Cor. xii. 3. *I give you to understand, that —— no man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

WE trust that amongst us there are none so hostile to the name of Christ, as to "call Jesus accursed;" and therefore we omit from our text that part which is inapplicable to the age in which we live. There were among the Jews many, who, whilst they rejected Christ as an impostor, pretended to be inspired by the Holy Ghost, and, either through magic or satanic influence, wrought "signs and lying wonders" in confirmation of their word. Amongst Believers themselves also, there were some, who made a very unbecoming use of the miraculous powers with which they were endowed, priding themselves upon them, and exerting them rather for the furtherance of their own glory, than for the edification of the Church of Christ. To rectify the views of the Corinthians on these subjects, St. Paul informs them, that the unbelieving Jews, whatever they might pretend to, had not the Spirit of God; since "no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed:" nor, on the other hand, had those, who possessed the miraculous influences of the Spirit, any such ground for self-preference and self-complacency as they imagined; since every true Believer enjoyed those influences which were infinitely the most important; for that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

This is a truth of infinite importance; and St. Paul was very anxious that it should be duly weighed and considered. We will, therefore,

I. Explain

I. Explain the assertion in our text—

It is obvious that the text is not to be understood as denying our power to make use of that particular expression; because that form of words is as easily used as any other: but it affirms, that we cannot, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, make use of that assertion,

1. With a full conviction of its truth—

[We may easily from education give a notional assent to the whole Gospel; but when we come to reflect on the idea of our God becoming incarnate, and offering himself a sacrifice for the sins of his rebellious creatures, and reconciling them to himself through his own sufferings upon the cross, the mind revolts at the thought; and the whole plan of the Gospel appears a cunningly-devised fable. We see not any need for such an intervention of the Deity. We are ready to ask, Why could not God pardon us without such an atonement? Why could not his mercy be extended to us on our repentance and amendment, without any such devices as those which the Gospel professes to reveal? Yes: when these mysteries are more nearly contemplated, they are "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness:" and "the natural man neither does, nor can, receive them[a]."]

2. With a just sense of its importance—

[Supposing the mysterious truths of Christianity to be admitted from the force of reasoning alone, the importance of them can never be felt, but from a deep consciousness of our guilt and helplessness before God. We must feel our disease, before we justly appreciate the remedy. But who can ever know the desperate wickedness of his own heart, unless he be taught of God[b]? Who can see the fulness that is in Christ, and his suitableness to our necessities[c], till the eyes of his understanding have been enlightened by the Spirit of the living God[d]? We must be "brought out of darkness into marvellous light," before "Christ can become so precious to us" as he deserves to be.]

3. With a suitable determination to act upon it—

[When we truly confess Christ as our Lord and Saviour, we shall of necessity feel his love constraining us to live no longer to ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again[e]. But who can thus live, unless he be aided and strengthened from on high? Are the world, the flesh, and the

[a] 1 Cor. i. 23. & ii. 11, 14. [b] Jer. xvii. 9.
[c] Rev. iii. 17, 18. [d] Eph. i. 17, 18. [e] 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

the devil so easily vanquished, that we can by any power of our own subdue them? No: it is "not by might or by power, but by the Spirit of God" alone that such victories are gained[f]. Grace must lay the foundation-stone; and grace must bring forth the head-stone: and to all eternity must the glory be ascribed to the grace of God alone[g].]

Thus comprehensive is the assertion contained in our text. We will now,

II. Commend it to your most attentive consideration—

The Apostle evidently considered this declaration as of peculiar importance: "I give you to understand this," says he; and I wish you ever to bear it in remembrance, as of singular use both for the instruction of your minds, and the regulation of your lives. This one assertion, truly understood, will shew you,

1. What is the great office of the Holy Spirit in the economy of Redemption—

[Amongst the many purposes for which our blessed Lord was sent into the world, one was, to "declare the Father to us[h]." But the chief end for which the Holy Spirit is sent, is, to "testify of Christ," and "to take of the things that are his, and to shew them unto us[i]." This then is the end for which we are to desire the gift of the Holy Ghost: we should feel sensible that we cannot know Christ, unless the Spirit reveal him in us[k]; or come to him, except the Spirit draw us[l]; or be one with him, unless the Spirit form him in our hearts[m]. This is a point by no means considered as it ought to be. We have an idea that the Holy Spirit is to "help our infirmities;" but we have no conception of the extent to which we need that help, and especially in relation to the knowledge of Christ. But we intreat you to consider fully the declaration in our text, and to take it as a clue, which, if duly followed, "will guide you into all truth."]

2. How deeply we are concerned to obtain his gracious influences—

[If "to know Christ be life eternal[n]," and those who know

[f] Zech. iv. 6. & Phil. ii. 13. 2 Cor. iii. 5.
[g] 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9. 2 Cor. v. 5. Rev. vii. 9, 10.
[h] John i. 18. & xvii. 26.
[i] John xv. 26. & xvi. 14.
[k] Matt. xi. 27.
[l] John vi. 44.
[m] Gal. iv. 19.
[n] John xvii. 3.

know him not must die in their sins[o], it is obvious, that we never can obtain salvation but through the all-powerful agency of the Holy Spirit. But we need not take this in a way of deduction; for the voice of Inspiration has expressly said, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his[p]." Should it not then be a matter of serious inquiry with every one of us, Whether we have received the Holy Ghost; and whether he has performed in us that great work of discovering to us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ[q]? Let us not be satisfied with any views which are merely obtained from books, and which may float in the mind without any influence on the heart; but let us, by prayer and supplication, seek the gift of the Holy Spirit, that through him we may be taught what no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived[r].]

3. How thankful we should be for the smallest measure of his influence—

[If we have been taught truly and from our hearts to say that Jesus is the Lord, we then have certainly received the Holy Ghost, since it is by his gracious influence alone that we are enabled to do so. The assertion in our text establishes this truth beyond a doubt: for "no man," however learned he may be, has any advantage over the poor *in this respect.* "If any man will be wise," he must divest himself of all his fancied pre-eminence, and "become a fool, that he may be wise[s]." On the other hand, if any man have attained a just knowledge of Christ, he has that, in comparison of which all other things are as dung and dross[t]. Let not any one then be cast down because he possesses a smaller measure of earthly distinctions: for there is an infinitely greater distance between the meanest Believer and the most learned Philosophers on earth, than can be found between any two persons that have been taught of God. The wisdom of this world is of no account in the sight of God; and at all events it benefits men only for this present life: but he to whom the Holy Spirit has imparted even the smallest measure of the knowledge of Christ, possesses the choicest gift that God himself can bestow, and is made "wise unto everlasting salvation."]

[o] John viii. 24. [p] Rom. viii. 9. [q] 2 Cor. iv. 6.
[r] 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. [s] 1 Cor. iii. 18. [t] Phil. iii. 8.

DCCCCLXIX.

THE OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

1 Cor. xii. 11. *All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

THE Corinthian Church was richly endowed with gifts: but the persons so endowed were not proportionably enriched with grace. Hence their gifts in too many instances administered only to strife and disorder; creating pride in some, who gratified themselves with an ostentatious display of their preternatural powers; and calling forth envy in others, whose powers were only of an inferior order. To counteract and rectify these disorders, St. Paul directed the people's attention to the origin and use of all these gifts which had been conferred upon them. He shewed them that they were all imparted by the Spirit of God according to his own sovereign will and pleasure, without any reference to the merits or attainments of the people themselves; and that they were bestowed on them, not for the aggrandisement of the favoured individuals, but for the benefit of the whole Church. This is the precise import of the whole chapter, as it is also of the fourteenth chapter, wherein the subject is still further prosecuted: it is confined, I say, to the *gifts* of the Spirit, without referring to the *graces*. Yet we shall take occasion from our text to notice also the *graces* of the Spirit, because they will be treated of with peculiar advantage in this connexion.

We will consider then the work of the Holy Spirit generally; and notice,

I. His miraculous operations—

The powers communicated by him to the Church were extremely various—

[At this time it is not easy to say what was the precise difference between some of the powers specified in the preceding contest, though doubtless, when the Epistle was written, they were well understood. "The word of wisdom," probably refers to a large and comprehensive view of the great mysteries

mysteries of Redemption; and "the word of knowledge," to a more particular insight into the types and prophecies, with an ability to explain them for the edification of others. "The faith," there mentioned, was such a confidence in God, as emboldened a person to go forward in the midst of all dangers undaunted and undismayed. "The gift of healing," was a power merely confined to the healing of disorders; whilst "the working of miracles" was operative on a larger scale. The gift of "prophecy," was a power of foretelling future and contingent events: the power of "discerning spirits," enabled a person to estimate with certainty and precision the motives by which others were actuated: the gift of "divers tongues," qualified a person to speak in languages which he had never learned: and "the interpretation of tongues," was a power of instantly interpreting such discourses to other persons in a language which they understood: so that, whilst some of the audience were addressed in a language familiar to them, the rest might also have the benefit of the discourse, by having it interpreted to them in their vernacular tongue; by which means, a mixed assembly, belonging to different countries, might all be instructed and edified by the same discourse.

If in this brief attempt to assign to each word its proper import we should not have exactly marked the precise meaning of each, it will be of little consequence; our object being, not so much to enter into a critical examination of doubtful points, as to mark that in which all are agreed; namely, that all the miraculous gifts, of whatever kind they were, proceeded *from* "that one and the self-same Spirit," the Third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity. And here we wish it to be distinctly noticed, how *repeatedly* that adorable Person is mentioned as the author of all the gifts: "To one is given, *by the Spirit*, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge, *by the same Spirit*; to another, faith, *by the same Spirit*; to another, the gifts of healing, *by the same Spirit*:" and then, after the mention of many other gifts, "All these worketh *that one and the self-same Spirit.*" This shews what a holy jealousy the Apostle felt for the honour of that Divine Agent; and how anxious he was that the people might not for a single moment forget, to whom, and to whom alone, they were indebted for every gift that they enjoyed.]

By him also all the gifts were bestowed according to his own sovereign will and pleasure—

[Doubtless whatever God does is founded, not in a mere arbitrary will, but in the inscrutable counsels of his own wisdom: still however, as far as we are concerned, the effect is the same as if his will alone were the ground of his actions; because

because the counsels by which they are regulated are known to himself alone. He has no respect to any thing in *us* as the ground of his preference: he is not influenced either by our merits, or our attainments; but dispenses his gifts to whomsoever he will, and in the measure that he sees fit; bestowing on some the higher gifts; on others, the lower; and on others, none at all. This is beautifully illustrated by a reference to the natural body[a]. The body consists of different members, to each of which is assigned some peculiar office, together with appropriate powers for the discharge of it. The eye, the ear, the hands, the feet, have all their own peculiar structure, fitted for the uses for which they were designed by God himself. The different powers were not given to any of them on account of its own superior goodness, or for its own use alone: but all were given for the use of the whole; "God having set every one of them in the body *as it hath pleased him*[b]." In relation to these, every one sees plainly, that God alone determined what powers to create, and where to place them in the body, and what measure of influence every member should possess: and, in the whole of it, nothing is for a moment contemplated but the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of the Creator. Never does any one entertain a thought that any one member has the least reason to glory over another, since all owe their respective powers *to the same Divine Author*; and all are mutually dependent on each other for such aid as they are severally fitted to impart. A more apt illustration could not have entered into the mind of man. The members of the Corinthian Church composed all one body in Christ: and their respective talents, whether of a higher or inferior order, were committed to them by the Spirit of God, not for their own use or honour, but for the good of the whole; God himself, in the whole of the dispensation, having consulted only his own wisdom, and acted only according to his own sovereign will[c].]

In connexion with the miraculous operations of the Spirit, we have proposed to consider also,

II. His spiritual influences—

These also are greatly diversified—

[We have several mentioned by St. Paul: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance[d]." In truth, every holy disposition is from him, even "from that self-same Spirit," "from whom cometh every good and perfect gift." The illumination of the mind is from him; for it is he whom "the

[a] ver. 12—27. [b] ver. 18.
[c] Heb. ii. 4. [d] Gal. v. 22, 23.

"the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ gives to us, as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him[e]." The sanctification of the soul is from him; for "God has chosen us through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience[f]." From him also is all spiritual consolation: for it is on this very account that He is called "The Comforter[g]." From the very beginning to the end of our salvation, it is He who "worketh all in all." Are we born again? it is "of the Spirit[h]." Are we helped in our infirmities? it is "by the same Spirit[i]." Are we progressively changed into the Divine image from one degree of glory to another? it is "by the same Spirit[k]." Have we in our souls a sure testimony of our adoption into God's family? it is "from the same Spirit[l]." Are we sealed unto the day of redemption[m]? it is by the same Spirit, who alone "worketh all our works in us[n]."]

They are given too according to his own sovereign will and pleasure.

[We are expressly told, that he "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will[o];" and that he "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure[p]." We see how sovereignly he dispensed his blessings in the days of old, giving to Abraham faith; to Moses, meekness; to Job, patience; to Daniel, wisdom; to Paul, zeal and love. Whence was it that these were so eminent for those particular graces by which they were severally distinguished? Whence was it that a few poor fishermen were chosen to be the depositories of divine knowledge in preference to any of the Scribes and Pharisees, or any of the philosophers of Greece and Rome? Whence in every age has God "revealed to babes and sucklings the things which he has hid from the wise and prudent?" There is but one answer to be given to it all; "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight[q]." "God's grace is his own[r];" and he imparts it to whomsoever he will, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ[s];" that is, in the time, and manner, and measure that he sees fit. From the whole of his work, human merit is absolutely excluded as the procuring cause[t], as human strength is as the efficient cause[u], that no flesh should glory in his presence, but all the glory be given to God alone[x].]

Let us LEARN from hence,

1. What we are to think of this great Agent—

[*Volition*

[e] Eph. i. 17.
[f] 2 Thess. ii. 13. & 1 Pet. i. 2.
[g] John xiv. 16, 17.
[h] John iii. 5.
[i] Rom. viii. 26.
[k] 2 Cor. iii. 18.
[l] Rom. viii. 15, 16.
[m] Eph. i. 13, 14.
[n] Isai. xxvi. 12.
[o] Eph. i. 5, 6, 9, 11.
[p] Phil. i. 13.
[q] Matt. xi. 25, 26.
[r] Matt. xx. 15.
[s] Eph. iv. 7.
[t] Tit. iii. 5, 6.
[u] 1 Cor. xv. 10.
[x] 1 Cor. iv. 7.

[*Volition is inseparable from personality:* and such actions, as are here ascribed to the Holy Spirit, proceed from none other than God. The enabling of men to work all kinds of miracles is beyond the power of any finite and created intelligence to effect. Here then we have a demonstration of the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit. This passage alone establishes this doctrine beyond a doubt. And when we recollect, that all our hope is from HIM: that as our justification is altogether from the Lord Jesus Christ, so our sanctification is altogether from the Holy Spirit; it is of infinite importance that our minds be rightly instructed in reference to this point: for as, if Christ be not God, we can have no hope from his death, so, if the Holy Spirit be not God, we can have no hope from his agency. Let this truth then be settled in our minds; that He who, in the economy of Redemption, has engaged to supply the place of Christ on earth[y], is very God[z], and able to effect for us, and in us, the whole work which he has undertaken.]

2. Whither we are to look for all needful assistance—

[To this Divine agent must we look, and not in any respect to ourselves. He it was who wrought the whole work in the days of the Apostles, and has continued to work in the Church even to the present hour. To him therefore must we look. Let us suppose the present assembly to be in the very state in which that assembly was on the day of Pentecost; our eyes as blind, our hearts as hard, yea, our hands yet reeking with the Saviour's blood: must we despair? No: *He, who converted thousands of them in one single day, can work effectually on us also, and accomplish in us all that our necessities require* — — — Let us pray then that the Spirit may be poured out upon us as he was upon them: and then may we expect the same *moral* change on our hearts as was wrought on theirs. Let but "the word come to us in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," and all will be done for us that shall be necessary for our sanctification and our complete salvation.]

3. To whom we must give the glory of all that is good in us—

["He that hath wrought us to the self-same thing, is God:" and he must be acknowledged as the sole author of all good. As in the miraculous powers that were imparted, "he was all in all;" and as in the faculties which our different members possess, "he is all in all;" so must he be in all that is wrought in our souls[a]. Whatever then be our faculties of mind or body, they must be improved for him, that he may be glorified

[y] John xvi. 7. [z] See Acts v. 3, 4. [a] ver. 6.

glorified in all: And, whatever graces we possess, they must be exercised, not for our own honour, but for his, "that God in all things may be glorified through Christ Jesus."]

DCCCCLXX.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

1 Cor. xiii. 1—3. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

IN the Apostolic age, the Church enjoyed some advantages, to which we of this day are strangers. The vast variety of gifts which were vouchsafed to the primitive Believers, tended greatly to fix their attention on the truths that were delivered, and to confirm the faith of those who heard them. On the other hand, these gifts were attended with some disadvantages; inasmuch as they gave rise to an unholy emulation in the persons who possessed them, and an undue partiality in those for whose benefit they were exercised. On the whole, we need not envy them their distinctions, since their gifts, how exalted soever they might be, were nothing in comparison of that which we, as well as they, are privileged to possess. Love is of more value than them all. Gifts might edify others; but love benefits ourselves: and, without love, all the gifts that men ever possessed were of no value. This is asserted by St. Paul in our text. But, as his assertions are of a very extraordinary kind, we shall endeavour to explain and vindicate them to your satisfaction.

I. To explain—

In order to place the passage in its true point of view, we shall explain,

1. The principle itself—

[This

[This throughout the whole chapter is called "charity." The generality of Commentators have expressed their regret that the word "love" had not been substituted in the place of "charity," that being confessedly the true meaning of the term used in the original. But we do not conceive the translation to be open to the objection that is urged against it: for it is not possible for any one, who reads the chapter with attention, to imagine, that it relates exclusively to alms-giving: the most ignorant reader must see, that the principle, which is here called "charity," is far more extensive, and can by no means have so limited a sense, as these objectors would suppose them to affix to it. We, on the contrary, think that the translators intentionally preferred the term "charity," in order to mark distinctly that the principle here spoken of is love to *man* only, and not love to *God*. That it must be so limited, is evident from the whole preceding and following context. The Corinthians possessed many miraculous powers, which, though given them only for the edification of the Church, were exerted by them principally for vain-glorious and selfish ends. Hence the Apostle tells them, that they defeated the very ends for which these powers had been imparted, and trampled upon that principle of Christian love, which was of more value than all the powers that either men or angels could possess. Besides, all the properties which in this chapter are ascribed to love, shew it to have man, and man alone, for its object. And those who interpret the word as including love to God also, make the import of the whole chapter obscure and unintelligible. We therefore approve of the term 'charity," as giving to the passage its true, and definite, and more appropriate meaning.

Yet we must bear in mind, that it is *Christian* charity which is here spoken of; namely, charity founded on a regard to the authority of God who has enjoined it, and on a regard to Christ also, in and through whom all the human race may be considered as united in one great family. His example is no less binding upon us than the command of God: and therefore, though we confine the term to the love of *man* only, we understand by it *such* a love, as is founded altogether on *Christian* principles, and is combined with all other gracious affections.]

2. The assertions respecting it—

[Such in the Apostle's judgment is the value and importance of Christian charity, that, without it, *all that we can possess* is of no value, and *all that we can do* is of no value.

Without it, *all that we can possess* is of no value.—It is here supposed that a man may be able to speak with all the wisdom and eloquence both of men and angels; that he may possess a gift of prophecy so as to foretel future events; that he may have

have a perfect insight into all the most hidden mysteries of our religion, and an ability to solve all its difficulties; yea, that he may possess a faith whereby he may be able to remove mountains; and yet be destitute of this principle of universal charity. And certain it is that all these miraculous powers are independent of gracious affections, and have been more or less exercised by men, who, like Balaam, were altogether destitute of the grace of God. Supposing then a man to possess all these powers in their highest possible degree, and at the same time to be destitute of the principle of true charity, he would, as the Apostle says, be only "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal," the most harsh and monotonous of all the instruments from whence any thing like music can be elicited.

Moreover, without this principle of charity, *all that we can do* is of no value. It is supposed here that a person may have such a fit of liberality as to give all his goods to feed the poor; and such a fit of zeal as to give his body to be burned; and yet be destitute of this principle. And certain it is, that there are principles in our fallen nature capable of producing these effects in men who have never received one atom of the grace of God, or felt one spark of true charity. Many thousands of our fellow-subjects in India are awful examples of this truth; men reducing themselves to the most wretched state of want and misery, and women voluntarily burning themselves upon the funeral pile of their deceased husbands; and this from no better principle than pride and vain-glory. Similar effects are produced also by a self-righteous principle; the unhappy devotees accounting nothing too much to do or suffer in order to recommend themselves to their senseless deities. Supposing then a man to do all this, and yet to be devoid of charity, "it would profit him *nothing*," literally "*nothing*." Not one of his sins would ever be removed by it; nor would he be advanced one single step towards the favour of God: he would be as poor, and wretched, and miserable as before.]

Now these, it must be confessed, are very strong assertions: and the idea of a man going from the flames of martyrdom to the flames of hell, is so shocking, that we scarcely know how to admit it for one moment. Yet is it really true that this may be the case; as is abundantly evident from the Apostle's assertions; which now we will proceed,

II. To vindicate—

Let it be remembered that the principle, which is

is here supposed to be wanting is that of universal "charity." And well may it be said, that, in the absence of that, all other things are of no value; for, where that is wanting, there can be,

1. No love to God—

[Here St. John will prove to us an infallible instructor. His words are plain and decisive: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God. *He that loveth not, knoweth not God:* for God is love." "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen[a]?" Here he not only declares the vanity and falsehood of all pretensions of love to God, whilst we are destitute of love to man, but he appeals to us respecting it, as a matter that is self-evident and incontrovertible. For a man to pretend to obey the first table of the law, whilst he tramples habitually on all the duties of the second table, is absurdity too glaring for any one seriously to maintain. If we are destitute of love to man, we cannot possibly be possessed of love to God.

Now then, we would ask, In what light must that man be viewed who has no love to God? Of what value are his *gifts*, how great or manifold soever they may be? Or of what value are his *actions*, how glorious soever they may be in the eyes of man? Can the man please God, when he does not love him? Can the man enjoy God, when he does not love him? Could he enjoy God even in heaven itself, if he did not love him? No: if it be only a fellow-creature whom we do not love, we have no pleasure in his presence, even though he himself be not the only source from whence our comfort might be drawn: how then could we be happy in God's presence, when he would be the only spring from whence even one drop of pleasure could flow? Verily, to such a man, even heaven itself would be no heaven; or rather, it would be to him as the precincts of hell.]

2. No faith in Christ—

[Love is properly the fruit of faith. Mere carnal affection, or party-spirit, may exist without any knowledge of Christ: but *Christian* charity must spring from faith in Christ, even from that faith, which, as the Apostle says, "worketh by love[b]." But here again the apostle John shall be our guide. In immediate connection with the forecited passages, he says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him[c]." Here the argument is plain: every

[a] 1 John iv. 7, 8, 20. [b] Gal. v. 6. [c] 1 John v. 1.

every one that believes in Christ, loves God; and every one that loves God, loves those also who are begotten of him: consequently, if we love not those who are begotten of him, we have no love to God, nor any faith in Christ.

And what is the state of a man that has no faith in Christ? Can there be any value in any thing which he either has or does? He has no interest in Christ, no pardon of sin, no title to heaven, no hope beyond the grave: what signify then his pre-eminent talents, or his specious virtues? He may benefit others; but he cannot benefit himself: he may even "save others; but he himself will be a Cast-away." Yea, at this moment "he is in a state of condemnation, and the wrath of God abideth on him[d]."]

3. No real holiness of heart and life—

[The man that is destitute of charity tramples alike on both tables of the law. For, "the very end of the commandment, (the very end for which the law was given, and which it was principally intended to effect,) is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned[e]:" and this end not being answered, the whole law is made void. Again; St. Paul says, that "all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself[f]:" therefore, if this one grace is so connected with every part of the law as to fulfil it all, the want of this one grace must violate it all. Once more: it is said, "Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness[g]:" it is that by which all the graces that constitute perfection are bound together, just as the armour was by the girdle that enclosed it. This therefore being wanting, no grace whatever is found in its proper place: they are altogether scattered to the winds.

What then, we would again ask, is the state of such a man? a man that defeats the one end for which the law was given; that violates it in all its parts; and leaves at the disposal of every gust of passion all the graces which it was intended to combine? We think that nothing more is wanting to confirm all the strong assertions of the Apostle, or to shew that, whatever a man may either possess or do, without charity he is nothing but a tinkling cymbal; he will be nothing to all eternity, but a miserable, self-deceiving, self-ruined hypocrite.]

From this view of Christian charity, LEARN the importance,

1. Of understanding clearly its nature—

[Certain it is that the nature of Christian charity is but little

[d] John iii. 18, 36.
[e] 1 Tim. i. 5.
[f] Gal. v. 14.
[g] Col. iii. 14.

little known. In truth, had it not been so fully opened in the chapter before us, it may well be doubted whether any man upon the face of the earth would have fully understood it: or rather, it may be doubted, whether any man on the face of the earth does fully understand it even now. No part of it can be understood any farther than it is experienced in the soul: and the defects of men in the practice of it shew how defective must be their views of its extent and obligations. But, it is only in proportion as we understand it, that we can have any just standard whereby to estimate our own character, or any sure directory for our conduct. But God will judge us by his perfect law, whether we understand it or not. He does not reduce his demands to the measure which we choose to fix; but requires us diligently to learn his will, and then to do it "without partiality and without hypocrisy." Our first object then must be to get a thorough insight into the requirements of his law, and then to set ourselves with all diligence to the performance of it.]

2. Of ascertaining our state in relation to it—

[Often should we bring ourselves to the touchstone, to try what our state is before God. We have seen how high we may be in the estimation of men, whilst yet we are nothing in the sight of God. Perhaps there are no persons more eminent in their own eyes, than those who attract great attention by their talents, or by liberality and zeal have high credit for their attainments. But such persons often fearfully deceive their own souls[h]. If we would form a right judgment of our character, let us study this chapter thoroughly, and apply to our hearts and consciences every one of those properties by which Christian charity is there distinguished. Let us further study the character of the apostle Paul, and of our blessed Lord himself: and thus shall we know, with some considerable measure of certainty, what is God's estimate of us, and what his sentence will be upon us in the great and awful day.]

3. Of cultivating the growth of it in our souls—

[There is no measure of Christian charity with which we are to rest satisfied: we are always to be pressing forward for higher and higher attainments. St. Paul commends the Thessalonians, because "their faith grew exceedingly, and the charity of every one of them towards each other abounded[i]." Let us seek to merit that commendation. It is in that way only that we can make our profiting to appear, or give evidence that we are growing from babes to young men, and from young men to fathers. Love is the image of God; and the more we increase in it, the more we adorn our Christian profession,

[h] Gal. vi. 3. [i] 2 Thess. i. 3.

profession, and attain "a meetness for the heavenly inheritance." Let us all then "follow earnestly this best of gifts;" and however much any of you may have attained, "we beseech you to abound more and more[k]."]

[k] 1 Thess. iv. 9, 10.

DCCCCLXXI.

A DESCRIPTION OF CHARITY.

1 Cor. xiii. 4—7. *Charity suffereth long, and is kind: charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

OF all the subjects proposed to us in the Holy Scriptures, there is not one that deserves a deeper attention than that before us. If only we consider what is said of charity in the preceding verses, and reflect on the indispensable necessity of it to our acceptance with God, we shall be led to inquire diligently into its characteristic features, and its inseparable properties: we shall not satisfy ourselves with any specious appearances, or outward acts; but shall examine, whether, and how far, this divine principle exists in our hearts. To assist you in this inquiry, we shall enter minutely into the description here given of it; and endeavour to hold up a mirror, in which every one may behold his own face. It is but too common, when subjects of this kind are discussed, to apply them to others, rather than ourselves: but, if we would hear with profit, we must think of ourselves only; and implore of God the influences of his Spirit, that "the word may come, not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," to our souls.

There are here no less than fifteen particulars by which the principle of charity is distinguished. But we apprehend, that the two first are designed to give a general view of the subject; and that those which follow are the particulars comprehended under it.

The suffering patiently all kinds of evil, and doing cheerfully all kinds of good, are the constituent parts of true charity: and these are expressed by those two words, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind:" and St. Paul elsewhere sums up the whole of Charity in these two things; "Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good[a]."

In fact, it is by these two terms that charity is depicted as existing and operating in the bosom of God himself: "Despisest thou the riches of his *goodness*, and forbearance, and *long-suffering*, not knowing that the *goodness* of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Here the words "*goodness* and *long-suffering*" are, in the original, the very same with those in the beginning of our text, "Charity *suffereth long*, and is *kind*:" from whence we may see that charity *in us* is of the same nature with charity *in God*; or, in other words, that it is *a conformity of heart to God, whose name and character is love*[b].

It is yet further observable, that there is, in the original, a marked difference between the mode in which *the general view* of the subject is stated, and *the particular parts* of it are enumerated; there being no copulative to connect the verbs. This distinction is marked also very properly in our translation; *the* copulative "and" being put in italics, to shew that it is not to be found in the original.

This view of the text removes all appearances of tautology, and opens an easy way for the discussion of it.

Descending thus to the consideration of the different particulars, we notice, that there is a marked difference also in the statement of them, in the former part, as compared with the latter part; the former consisting wholly of *negations*; and the latter, of *affirmations*: and thus presenting to our view,

I. The evils it excludes—

These may fitly be distributed under five heads:

1. Envy: "Charity envieth not"—

[Envy

[a] Rom. xii. 21. [b] 1 John iv. 16.

[Envy is a repining at another's prosperity, or good, which we ourselves desire to possess: and it is a principle deeply rooted in our fallen nature, insomuch that it may be seen to operate with great force even in children at the breast; so true is that testimony of the Apostle, "The spirit that dwelleth in us, lusteth to envy[c]." But how contrary is this to true charity! Can we conceive a mother to envy her own child any perfection it possessed, or any benefit that has been conferred upon it? or if there were such a mother, would she not, by the common consent of all men, be thought an unnatural monster, rather than a loving parent? Real love would lead her to rejoice in all the good that accrued to her child, though she herself were not a partaker of it: and this is the invariable operation of love, wherever it exists. Know then, that, whatever distinctions or benefits any other person may attain, whilst we ourselves have failed in the pursuit of them, we should feel only pleasure in his success; and if we grudge it him, and are disposed to detract from his merits, and to reduce him to a level with ourselves, we are actuated by the hateful principle of envy, and, in that instance at least, are destitute of the sublimer principle of love.]

2. Pride: "Charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly"—

[These three may properly be classed under the head of Pride. The word which is translated "vaunteth not itself," is in the margin translated, "is not rash:" and this perhaps is somewhat nearer to the original; which imports, that charity is not inconsiderate, insolent, and over-bearing. This is nearly allied with a conceit of one's own attainments, and naturally leads to a violation of all that respect which is due to age, and station, and legitimate authority.

Yet to what an extent do these evils exist! how headstrong, how self-opinionated, how presumptuous are youth in general, especially where they can give vent to their dispositions without restraint! But love is modest, sober, temperate: it pays a just deference to the sentiments of others; and willingly submits to the dictates of maturer age, and riper judgment.

If then we speak and act without a due consideration of what others may think, or a proper regard to what others may feel, or in any way that does not befit our age, our rank, our character, we violate the duties of charity; which teaches us to "esteem others better than ourselves[d]," and to guard with all possible care against every thing that may give just offence[e], or weaken the influence of our exertions for the good of

[c] Jam. iv. 5. [d] Phil. ii. 3. [e] 1 Cor. x. 32.

of others. In a word, real charity will lead us to "prefer others in honour before ourselves[f]," and to take on all occasions the lowest place[g].]

3. Selfishness: "Charity seeketh not her own"—

[Throughout the whole of this description, the Apostle seems to have had in his eye some of those particular evils which abounded in the Church at Corinth. This more especially he had occasion to reprove, both in the preceding and subsequent context. Many of them were possessed of gifts, which they used chiefly for the advancement of their own honour, when they should have improved them solely for the Church's good. And this disposition fearfully predominates in our fallen nature: "All men seek their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ[h]." But true charity triumphs over all these narrow and contracted feelings: it teaches us not to seek our own ease, honour, profit, but in entire subserviency to the good of others[i]; and to become the servants of all for Christ's sake[k], sacrificing our just rights[l], abridging our unquestionable liberty[m], and accommodating ourselves either to the wishes or the prejudices of others[n]; for the better promotion of their welfare. This is charity: but whereinsoever *self* predominates, so as to turn us from this blessed path, we are destitute of that heavenly principle, whose direction is, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth[o]."]

4. Wrath: "Charity is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil"—

[It not unfrequently happens in a family, that, in the estimation of him who is at the head of it, one member can do nothing that is good; and another member, nothing that is wrong. But whence arises this? Is it that the one is so perfect as never to err; and the other so depraved, as never to do right? No: the actions of the two are seen through a different medium; the one through the medium of prejudice, and the other of love. Now such a measure of partiality as can find no fault, is far from being desirable; nor is it any part of true charity. But charity keeps us from breaking forth into wrath against an offending brother; and suffers us not to impute evil intentions to him, to aggravate his offence. Where there is a continual disposition to find fault, and a readiness to fly out into a rage on trifling occasions,—where there is a proneness to put an unkind construction on every thing,

[f] Rom. xii. 10. [g] Luke xiv. 10. [h] Phil. ii. 21.
[i] 1 Cor. x. 33. [k] 1 Cor. ix. 19. [l] ib. ver. 15.
[m] 1 Cor. viii. 13. [n] Acts xvi. 3, & xxi. 26.
[o] 1 Cor. x. 24. & Phil. ii. 4.

thing, and to judge persons with severity,—there is no charity. Let us but observe how ready we are to find excuses for any one we greatly love, or even for a favourite animal that has committed a fault, and we shall see immediately what would be our conduct towards our brethren, if we had real love to them in our hearts. How ingenious are we in finding excuses for ourselves, when we have done any thing amiss! and if self-love operate so towards ourselves, would not the love of our brethren prescribe somewhat of a similar measure towards them? Yes assuredly: we should "be slow to wrath," as we find we are, comparatively at least, towards those whom we love; and ready to extenuate, rather than aggravate, what we cannot fully approve.]

5. Malice: "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth"—

[To find pleasure in the fall or disgrace of another is the very essence of malice, the counterpart of Satan himself. Yet how universally prevalent is this malignant disposition! Has any person, especially one whom we have regarded as a superior or a rival, done any thing whereby he has lowered himself in the estimation of mankind? with what pleasure do we listen to the tale! what gratification do we feel in circulating the report! and what a satisfaction do we take, even whilst we profess to pity him, in the fall and degradation of our brother! If afterwards we find that the report was not true, or that there were circumstances which materially altered the real character of the action, do we feel the same pleasure in having our own judgment rectified, and in rectifying the misapprehensions of others? No: there is not the same gratification to our corrupt nature in believing and circulating the one, as in crediting and spreading the other: and therefore, whilst we are ready enough to propagate the evil, we leave truth to find its way as it can. But this is not the way in which love will shew itself: charity finds no pleasure in that which causes pain to another, or dishonour to God: but it is delighted with every thing which may tend to the advancement of God's honour and our brethren's good.]

In this copious description of charity, we see yet further,

II. The habits it keeps in exercise—

1. It "beareth," or, as the word rather means, "covereth, all things"—

[Where love does not exist, there will be a readiness to spy out evil, and to spread the report of it far and wide: but where it reigns, there will be a disposition rather to cast a veil over our brother's faults, yea and over his sins too; according as it is written,

written, "Charity will cover a multitude of sins[p]." Where the revealing of what we know is necessary for the maintenance of public justice, there love to the community will supersede the obligation of which we are now speaking: but where no necessity exists for exposing the shame of our brother, we ought as far as possible to conceal it, and to cast over it the mantle of love. This is what a man does towards those with whom he stands most intimately connected by the ties of consanguinity or friendship: and he will deal the same measure to all, in proportion as the general principle of Christian charity prevails in his soul.]

2. It "believeth all things"—

[This must of course be restricted to *good:* for to believe hastily all manner of *evil* would be directly contrary to love. In the things which we either see or hear, there must of necessity be a great deal which cannot come under our observation. Acts are visible; but the motives which lead to them are hid from us. Results too may be visible; but all the circumstances that led to them, and the precise manner in which they were brought about, may be very imperfectly known by us: and yet on these depends the innocence or criminality of the persons engaged in them. Now charity will *not* judge from outward appearances, or from partial information; but will suppose and believe that there are many things connected with the event, which, if fully known, would in some measure, if not altogether, justify the person condemned. In our courts of law, the Judge always considers himself as, in some degree, counsel for the person accused. Now this is what we should all be, in our daily *conduct:* a person accused is, as it were, brought to our bar for trial: and, instead of pronouncing a sentence of condemnation upon him instantly on the statement of his accuser, we should suspend our judgment till we know what he has to say in vindication of himself: and if we are not likely to gain that fuller information, we should take for granted that there are some circumstances, though unknown to us, that would give a different colour to the transaction, and constrain us to give a sentence in his favour.]

3. It "hopeth all things"—

[The reports we hear may be so full and circumstantial, and be corroborated by such a weight of evidence, that we can scarcely withhold our assent to the statement. Yet, if we cannot altogether *believe* that the accused person is less guilty than he is represented, we should "*hope*" it. We should not so definitively pass judgment on him, as if it

[p] 1 Pet. iv. 8.

it were impossible for us to err; or as if more perfect information might not give us a more favourable view of his conduct. If we are compelled to condemn him for an evil *act*, we should hope that the act was not formed into a habit: or, if we are constrained to lament that his iniquities are become a habit, still we should hope that he is not altogether incorrigible; we should not despair of seeing a change in his favour, or give him over as altogether reprobate. This is the way in which a loving parent acts towards his son; and it is the way in which we should act towards all the human race: we should believe, where we cannot see; and hope, where we cannot believe; and cherish desire, where we can scarcely entertain a hope.]

4. It "endureth all things"—

[Much will we bear from a beloved object, many unkindnesses, and many injuries: and, especially if we have a prospect of ultimately benefiting his soul, we can bear up under his ill treatment with much long-suffering and forbearance. This at least is the proper effect of love; as we see in St. Paul, who says, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." It is not a slight provocation or two that love will overlook, but a long-continuance of provocations: it will forgive, not once, or seven times, but seventy times seven. It will continue to bless even the man that loads us with curses, and to accumulate benefits on him who seeks only to do us evil. It so endures evil, as "not to be overcome by it;" and makes such returns for it, as to "overcome it with good." Its great aim is, so to "heap coals of fire on the head of an adversary, as to melt him into love." In this consists the triumphs of the God of love; and in this will every one who is born of God endeavour to resemble his heavenly Father.]

Hence we may SEE,

1. How different is true religion from what men generally apprehend!

[Far be it from us to undervalue gifts of any kind, especially of those which have a favourable aspect on religion: and still less would we speak lightly of those alternations of hope and fear, of joy and sorrow, which many experience in their religious course. But still we must say, that vital religion is different from them all, as a building is from the scaffold that is used for its erection. Religion is a conformity to the Divine image: religion is the law of God written in the heart: religion is love; love in all its bearings, and in all its exercises. Happy would it be if this matter were better understood by those who profess religion: but,

with

with too many, religion has its seat in the ear and in the tongue, rather than in the heart; and operates rather in a way of conceit and talkativeness, and uncharitable censures of those who differ from us, than in meekness and modesty, benevolence and beneficence, forbearance and forgiveness. But let no man deceive himself: just so much as we have of real, active, and habitual charity, so much we have of true religion, and no more.]

2. How little is there of true religion in the world!

[Look into the world, and see what are the dispositions and habits of all around us: what do we see, but pride and envy, wrath and malice, self-seeking and self-indulgence? The whole world is full of uncharitableness: nothing is to be seen or heard but mutual censures and bitter animosities. The real actings of love are as little prevalent, I had almost said, as in hell itself. The laws of the land, and the habits of society, keep many from those violent breaches of charity which would disturb the public peace: but their secret heart-burnings, towards those who have injured or insulted them, shew sufficiently how little there is of true charity in their hearts.

Would to God that this were not the case also in the Church of God! But it is a lamentable truth, that in Christian Societies there is much of this unkind feeling in one towards another; Brethren alienated from each other by some trifling differences, and even harder to be reconciled to each other than the ungodly world. "Oh! tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ascalon, lest the uncircumcised triumph." But let Professors look well to this matter: for they shall be judged, not by their profession, but by their practice: and, however eminent they may be in the estimation of men, they will receive their doom from God, according to the actings of this principle in their hearts and lives.]

3. How thankful should we be for the rich provisions of the Gospel!

[Who amongst us could stand, if we were to be justified only by our obedience to this law? Who would venture his salvation upon it, even for one single day? Alas! "in many things we all offend:" there is not a human Being who does not come very short of the requirements of perfect charity. We need then, all of us, to wash in "the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness;" and to seek an interest in that Saviour, who alone fulfilled the law in all its full extent.

Nor can we obey this law *at all*, any farther than we are assisted by Divine grace. We need the influences of the Holy Spirit, to mortify and subdue the risings of uncharitableness within us. Whatever we may have attained, "the flesh

flesh still lusteth against the Spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would." But, blessed be God! the Holy Spirit is promised unto all who desire his gracious influences, and his operation shall be effectual for the ends and purposes for which he is given.

Whilst then we strive to be holy as God is holy, let us seek all our help from above, and "live by faith on the Son of God, who hath loved us, and given himself for us."]

DCCCCLXXII.

FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY COMPARED.

1 Cor. xiii. 13. *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

THE scope of the whole chapter is, to shew the superiority of Christian love or charity to all the gifts that were so erroneously estimated, and so ostentatiously displayed, in the Church of Corinth. In the course of his argument, the Apostle enumerates the principal offices of charity, and marks with singular accuracy and minuteness its proper qualities. The last of the properties which he mentions is, that it "never faileth;" whilst all miraculous powers, of whatever kind they be, are but for the short period of this present life. *They*, he observes, will soon vanish; *but this*, instead of disappearing, will endure in uninterrupted exercise, and be continued in undeviating perfection for evermore. Thus *incidentally* he is led to speak of the whole experience of Christians in relation to the objects of their faith and hope: they view them all but indistinctly, and know them very imperfectly; having little better conception of them than of a riddle, or enigma[a], in which some leading particulars only are set forth; and the rest is left, as it were, as matter of conjecture. In short, Christians, not excepting the Apostle himself, are but children, in relation to the deep things of God; and, when they shall be exalted to heaven, they will discard all their puerile notions respecting

[a] See the original, and the marginal translation of ver. 12.

respecting them, just as they now do the weaknesses of childhood on their arrival at man's estate[b]. The Apostle having thus, unintentionally as it were, been drawn from the consideration of miraculous *gifts* to the mention of Christian *graces*, proceeds to assert the superiority of love above the sister graces of faith and hope, as he had before shewn its superiority to all the miraculous powers that ever were possessed: "There now remain" (for constant use and exercise) "faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

To confirm this declaration, we will shew,

I. The distinguishing excellencies of faith and hope—

These, with love, form the cardinal graces of a Christian: and they are indispensable to his happiness, both in this world and in the world to come. That we may know how to appreciate their value, we will distinctly notice the excellencies,

1. Of faith—

[This, when infused into the soul by the Spirit of God, and called forth into exercise according to the will of God, is a principle truly wonderful. It beholds things that are invisible; and presents to the eye of the mind all the perfections and purposes of God himself. It is conversant with all that God has ever revealed; and especially with that stupendous mystery, the redemption of the world by God's only dear Son, and the restoration of men to the Divine image by the influence and operation of the Holy Ghost. It goes farther still; and apprehends all that God has ever promised, and appropriates to itself all the blessings of his everlasting covenant. It seizes by a holy violence[bb] all that God *is*, and all that God *has*, even all his glory; and invests the soul with all of it, as its present and everlasting portion. It brings Christ himself down into the soul[c]; fills it with his love, and enriches it with all his fulness[d]. As for difficulties, they all vanish, and are dispelled by the power of faith. There is a kind of omnipotence in this grace. No enemy can withstand it: "All things are possible to him that believeth." The more dark our way is, the more scope there is for the exercise of this grace, and the more it triumphs. In this point of view, it, far beyond any other grace, reflects honour on God: it

[b] ver. 11.
[bb] Matt. xi. 12.
[c] Eph. iii. 17.
[d] ib. ver. 18, 19.

it fixes on the Divine perfections, and calls every one of them to its aid: it presses even justice itself into its service; and never will let go its claims upon God's mercy and truth: it finds quite sufficient encouragement in a single promise. See it in Abraham: he assured himself, that though Isaac should be slain and reduced to ashes, he should be raised again from the dead, and the promises should be fulfilled in him. And thus does faith operate in the hearts of all; and, in proportion as it operates, secures to us a victory over all the enemies of our salvation.]

2. Of hope—

[This is a *less comprehensive* grace than faith: for faith has respect to every thing that is revealed, whether past, present, or future; and to things evil, as well as good: whereas hope respects futurity only, and only that which is either really, or in its own conception, good. It is also a *less honourable* grace than faith: for its existence is derived from faith, and altogether dependent on it; and it has respect only to our own personal happiness, whilst faith rises above self, and seeks to advance the glory of God.

Still however it is a grace of vast importance; and the entire absence of it is the most striking character of hell, where all are immersed in darkness and despair. This is the grace which encourages and supports the soul in all its conflicts with sin and Satan. In the panoply of God it holds a most conspicuous place: it is the helmet that protects the head, and the breast-plate that defends the heart: so that, where hope is kept in exercise, Satan cannot inflict any deadly wound. True, he may raise storms and tempests around the soul, and menace it with instant destruction: but hope casts "its anchor within the veil;" and, deriving thence "a sure and stedfast" support, defies the utmost efforts of our great adversary[e]. How often would the strongest Believer have failed, if he had not received succour from this grace! "I should have fainted," says David, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living[f]." It was no less by this grace, than by faith itself, that the saints of old were enabled to endure the great fight of afflictions which they were called to sustain[g]. On this account hope is said to save us, no less than faith[h]: for though faith brings us into the way of salvation, it is hope that enables us to endure unto the end[i].]

After such a view of faith and hope, it will almost be thought, that no higher commendation can be bestowed

[e] Heb. vi. 19. [f] Ps. xxvii. 13. [g] Heb. xi. 26, 35.
[h] Rom. viii. 24, 25. [i] 1 Cor. xv. 58. Gal. vi. 9.

bestowed on any other grace: but there is abundant scope yet left for shewing,

II. The superior excellence of charity—

Of the three graces, the Apostle expressly asserts, that "the greatest is charity." And its superiority will be found,

1. In its nature—

[Faith and hope, how excellent soever they be, derive all their value from the objects on which they terminate. If they had respect only to human testimony, and temporal objects, they would be of little worth: it is their connection with God, and with eternity, that so elevates them in the scale of Christian graces. But charity has an essential goodness in itself, irrespective of any object towards whom it may be exercised. If we could suppose that the whole human race both in heaven and earth were swept away, so that we could never find a Being towards whom the grace of charity could be exercised, still would the disposition itself be good. As God himself would have been good, even though no creature had ever existed towards whom his goodness should be displayed; so would the grace of charity be good, though there never should be found any scope for its exercise. It is the image of God upon the soul. God himself has no higher character than love: and, if in this character we resemble him, we have the highest excellence of which our nature is capable.

Only let us consider what the existence of charity in the soul supposes. It supposes the subjugation of *all the evils* that are opposed to love; as pride, envy, hatred, wrath, selfishness; and the presence of *all the virtues* which were in Christ Jesus. They were all comprehended in this single word, love; and consequently the existence of this grace in the soul most assimilates us to Christ, "in whom was no sin, and in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Nor should it be overlooked, that the production of love in the soul was the end for which all God's other mercies were vouchsafed: for *that*, even faith and hope were given; nor have they any value, any farther than they are conducive to this end: and consequently love, for which alone they are given, must be greater than they; just as health, for which alone medicine is given, is better than medicine, which is valuable only as it is subservient to the preservation, or re-establishment, of health. *The end* must of necessity be greater than *the means*.]

2. In its duration—

[Faith and hope must soon cease; the one terminating in sight,

sight, and the other being consummated in fruition. But not so the grace of love: *that* will endure to all eternity; the exercise of it being the one employment and blessedness of heaven. The other graces which have been instrumental to the formation of this, will be no longer wanted, when this is perfected in the soul: they will therefore be dismissed, as having no longer any scope for exercise.

But when the scaffolding is removed, the building will appear in all its glory, the most wonderful monument of the power and grace of Christ. Then indeed will Christ "be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe;" for every one of them will then "be fully like him, when they shall see him as he is."

Thus, how excellent soever the graces of faith and hope may be, that of charity far excels them both: for those will find no place in heaven; but this will remain an everlasting source of blessedness to man, and an eternal theme of honour to our God.]

Seeing, however, that during this present life "*these three remain*," and are to be cultivated with incessant care, we will close the subject with some DIRECTIONS for the exercise of them:

1. Keep them ever united in your hearts—

[No one of them can be dispensed with: if one be wanting, we must perish. We must indeed keep each of them in its place, and assign to each its proper office. We must not think that faith can save us, if it do not "work by love;" or that hope can benefit us, if it do not "purify us as Christ is pure;" or that love can supersede the necessity of faith in the work of our justification before God. We can be justified by faith only: but by love we must prove the truth of our faith. We must not imagine, that, because love is greater than faith, we are therefore to be saved by love. The eye is more excellent than the ear; but it cannot on that account perform the office of the ear, nor supersede the necessity of hearing, in order to the perfection of our present state: faith, hope, and love have all their distinct offices, and must all be exercised for their respective ends;—faith, to justify our souls; hope, to keep us stedfast in our spiritual course; and love, to form our meetness for the heavenly inheritance. Let all then be sought, and all be exercised, that God may be glorified in all.]

2. Let them all be held fast, whatever trials you may have to encounter in the exercise of them—

[No one of them can be maintained without much difficulty.

difficulty. Your great adversary will assault them all in their turn. In Adam he succeeded to destroy them all: and he would succeed to root them out of our hearts also, if the Lord Jesus did not secure, by his continual intercession, the establishment of them in our souls[k]. Not that they can be maintained without strenuous and unintermitted exertions on our part. We must "watch and pray that we enter not into temptation:" and when temptation comes, we must "not stagger at the promises through unbelief, but be strong in faith, giving glory to God." We must also "hold fast the rejoicing of our hope firm unto the end[l]." Under the influence of love too, we must "let patience have its perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing." Thus shall we "grow up into Christ as our living Head;" thus shall we attain "the full measure of the stature" which he has ordained for us; and thus shall we be fitted for those regions of love, where we shall completely resemble Christ, and participate, with all the myriads of his redeemed, the glory and felicity of the God of love.]

[k] Luke xxii. 31, 32. [l] Heb. iii. 6.

DCCCCLXXIII.

CHRIST A DYING AND A RISEN SAVIOUR.

1 Cor. xv. 1, 2. *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand: by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.*

SCARCELY had the good seed of the Gospel been sown in the world, before Satan, by his agents, scattered tares, which in the earlier stages of their growth could not easily be distinguished from them, and from which the field will never be wholly freed until the harvest. The Resurrection itself, that most fundamental doctrine of Christianity, on which every other doctrine rests, was denied by many. A Sadducean spirit of infidelity was imported into the Church from among the Jewish converts, as a vain philosophy was from among the Gentiles; and both concurred to bring into doubt the resurrection from the dead;—the one denying that it ever could take place, and the other asserting that it was only a mystical

mystical change which had taken place already: and between them both "the faith of many was overthrown." St. Paul therefore, in the close of this Epistle, set himself to counteract these errors, and to establish, for the benefit of the Church in all future ages, the truth which he had invariably maintained. He first shews that Christ had risen; and from thence he proceeds to prove that we also shall rise in like manner. But it is with the former position alone that we are concerned at present, that alone being referred to in the words before us; from which we shall be led to shew you,

I. What was the Gospel which Paul preached—

This is told us more fully in the words following our text.

The Apostle preached, that Christ had both died and risen according to the Scriptures—

[The Scriptures of the Old Testament had invariably asserted that Christ should suffer, and that he should rise again on the third day. Both these things were in some degree intimated in the first promise, that "the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head:" but they were more plainly revealed in the institutions of the Mosaic law, especially in the ordinance of the two birds; the one of which was killed, and the other, when dipped in the blood of the one that had been killed, being suffered to fly away[a]: as also in the appointment of the scape-goat, which carried into the wilderness all the sins which had been previously expiated by the blood of another goat that had been slain[b]. Both the one and the other had also been subjects of prophecy; his death being foretold in all its minutest circumstances——— and his resurrection being fixed to a precise time after it, even the third day, before any change towards corruption should have taken place upon his body[c].

What the Scriptures had thus plainly foretold, was in due time accomplished. The death of Christ was known to the whole Jewish nation, thousands of whom were spectators of it: nor was his resurrection less clearly ascertained; as even the falsehood invented to conceal it fully attests. The variety of occasions on which our Lord appeared to his Disciples after his resurrection, once to above five hundred brethren at once, left no possibility of doubt respecting it[d]: and to testify of

[a] Lev. xiv. 49—53.
[b] Lev. xvi. 8—10.
[c] Jon. i. 17. Ps. xvi. 9, 10.
[d] ver. 5—8.

of this was the great work committed, in the first instance to the twelve Apostles; and afterwards to the apostle Paul, to whom Jesus appeared in a vision, on purpose that he might be, in that respect, on a par with all the other Apostles.]

This he calls the Gospel—

[This, in truth, is the Gospel: and it comprehends all that is necessary for us to know. That "Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification," is the sum and substance of that mystery, which God from all eternity devised for the redemption of fallen man, and which is unfolded to us in the writings of the New Testament. We may expatiate upon the various parts of this mystery, so as to exhibit them more clearly and fully to your view; but we can never add to it: to attempt to add any thing to it, were to destroy it utterly. There is no redemption but through the death of Christ; no salvation, but through his renovated life*.——]

St. Paul having stated what the Gospel is, proceeds to shew,

II. In what manner it should be regarded by us—

The Corinthians "had received it into their hearts," and were at that time "standing in it;" and this shews us what we also must do—

1. We must "receive it" into our hearts by faith—

[We must "receive it" *as true*. There must be no doubt in our minds respecting it. We must have no more doubt of Christ expiating our guilt by his death, or of his rising to carry on in heaven the work he began on earth, than of our own existence. We must be thoroughly established in these great and fundamental truths. To question either the one or the other of them in any degree, were little better than to renounce Christianity altogether.

We must receive it also *as suitable*, yea, as exactly suited to our necessities. We must feel that we need precisely such an atonement as he offered for us; and that we also need a living Saviour, who shall make continual intercession for us with the Father, and communicate to us, out of his own inexhaustible fulness, all those supplies of grace and strength as our necessities require. It is this view of the correspondence between the offices of Christ and our necessities, and a consequent affiance in him for the supply of our wants, that constitutes the very essence of saving faith.

We must receive it also *as sufficient* for us. This great mystery of godliness is absolutely perfect. Nothing can be added to it. And of this we should be fully convinced. We should

* Rom. v. 10.

should see that there is in his death a sufficient "propitiation for the sins of the whole world:" and that there is in him such a fulness of all spiritual gifts, that "he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him."

In this way is his Gospel to be received, and thus it is that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness."]

2. We must "stand fast in it" even to the end—

[Nothing must be suffered to turn us away from this faith. We must brave all *persecutions*, and rather lay down our life than deny the Saviour in any manner. "It is he only who will lose his life for Christ's sake, that shall find it unto life eternal." Nor must we yield to the influence of *temptations* of any kind, so as to be drawn aside by them. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," if enjoyed in ever so great a degree, will but ill repay us for the loss which we shall sustain by suffering them to choke the good seed of Gospel truth: for "if any man draw back, my soul," says God, "shall have no pleasure in him." Neither must *Satan*, that subtle adversary, prevail against us by his *devices*. In ten thousand ways will he endeavour to "turn us from the simplicity that is in Christ:" but with "the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith" we must resist him till we are crowned with victory, and see him "bruised under our feet." We shall then, and then only, "be partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end[f]."]

In the Corinthians themselves we see,

III. The benefits that will accrue to those who duly receive it—

St. Paul says of them, that "they were saved by it:" and this benefit we confidently assure to all who embrace the Gospel with their whole hearts.

1. They shall be brought into a state of acceptance with God—

[When our Lord gave his Disciples their commission to preach his Gospel, he expressly authorized them to declare, that "all who believed it should be saved." And in all the book of God there is not to be found so much as one single word against a penitent Believer. "All who believe," says St. Paul, "are justified from all things:" even sins of a crimson dye are so washed as to be made "white as snow."]

2. They shall have the earnest and foretaste of the heavenly glory—

[There

[f] Heb. iii. 14.

[There is no limit to the blessings promised to the true Believer. The Spirit of God shall be poured out upon him, to reveal all the Father's love, and all the glory of Christ, to the soul. "He will glorify Christ, and take of the things that are his, and shew them unto us." He will be in us "a Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry, Abba, Father:" He "will witness to our spirits that we are the children of God:" He will give us "an earnest of our eternal inheritance," and "seal us unto the day of complete redemption."]

3. They shall be brought in safety to the full possession of their everlasting inheritance—

[It is here supposed that they "stand fast in the faith;" for if they "make shipwreck of the faith," they cannot hope for the blessings which are promised to those only who "endure unto the end." Hence is that caution given in our text; "Ye are saved, if ye keep in memory (and hold fast to the end) what I have preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." If our faith be only a dead faith, it will be in vain: for in this sense even "the devils believe and tremble." But, if our faith be living and lively, we need not fear. *That* never shall be exercised in vain. That shall overcome every thing that is opposed to it, and shall remove all the mountains that oppose our spiritual progress. Only live truly by faith on the Son of God as having loved you and given himself for you, and God pledges himself that "none shall ever pluck you out of his hands," and that "you shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life." By the exercise of this "faith you shall be kept by the power of God to a full and everlasting salvation;" for the Gospel still is, no less than in the Apostolic age, "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."]

We would IMPROVE this subject,

1. In a way of inquiry—

[Have you received this Gospel as you ought? We ask not whether you have a mere notional and speculative belief of it; for that is common to all who bear the Christian name: but have you such a faith in Christ as enables you to rejoice in all that he has done, and is yet doing, for you? Do you glory in him, and renounce every other ground of hope, and "cleave to him with full purpose of heart?" Do not deceive yourselves in relation to these things; for no faith is saving but that which brings you daily to the foot of his cross, and causes you to receive daily out of his fulness all the blessings which you stand in need of.]

2. In a way of caution—

[Those

[Those who are fettered by human systems pass over such cautions as are given in our text: but we dare not act thus. We are persuaded that cautions against apostacy are as necessary in their place as promises of perseverance. Attend then to the caution about "holding fast" what has been preached to you. Innumerable are the cautions given us in the Scriptures upon this head: and it is by a salutary fear of apostacy that God will keep us[g]. "Beware then lest, being led away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness[h]." Know where you strength is, even in your risen and exalted Saviour; and live altogether by faith in him, "holding fast your confidence, and the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end[i]."]

In a way of encouragement—

[Cleave thus unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and "ye shall be saved." However numerous or powerful your enemies may be, they shall not prevail against you: for "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." If indeed Christ be not able to keep you, then you may well give way to fears: but, if his death be a sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, and all power in heaven and in earth be committed to him for the use of his Church and People, then you may dismiss all fear: for, though only a worm in yourself, you shall "thresh the mountains." Be strong then, ye fearful and faint-hearted: for "he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, but will bring forth judgment unto victory." He has said that "of those who have been given him he will lose none;" and he is faithful who hath promised. "Fear not; only believe: and according to your faith it shall be unto you."]

[g] 1 Cor. ix. 27. [h] 2 Pet. iii. 17. [i] Heb. iii. 6.

DCCCCLXXIV.

ALL OF GRACE.

1 Cor. xv. 10. *By the grace of God I am what I am.*

EVERY one, however exalted, may find points of comparison in which he is inferior to others; and, instead of envying the superiority of others in those respects, it becomes him contentedly to acquiesce in the Divine appointments, and thankfully to adore God for whatever blessings he enjoys.

St. Paul, in descanting upon the resurrection of our

our Lord, has occasion to mention the different manifestations of himself which Christ had vouchsafed to his Apostles after he had risen from the dead. And in these respects, as well as in the advantages which the other Apostles had enjoyed from the instructions and example of their Divine Master, during the whole period of his Ministry on earth, he acknowledged his inferiority to them: for though at a subsequent period Christ had honoured him also with an immediate sight of his person, he considered himself as far less honoured by this than the other Apostles had been; and, having been himself a persecutor, whilst they were the faithful servants of their Lord, he regarded himself as no better than an abortion in comparison of the children. But still he was not without many grounds of thankfulness, which he was most ready to acknowledge: "I am not worthy to be called an Apostle," says he; "but by the grace of God I am what I am."

This declaration of his we propose to consider in a two-fold point of view:

I. As a speculative truth—

1. This assertion was true in the Apostle's case—

[View him *in his first conversion*, and there can be no doubt but that the mercy vouchsafed to him was all of grace. He was a bitter persecutor of the Church of Christ. He was a volunteer in this bloody service: and, of his own accord, sought from the Jewish Sanhedrim a commission to search out, even in a foreign country, all who professed the Christian faith, and to bring them indiscriminately, whether men or women, bound to Jerusalem. In this very employment he was actually engaged, and was come near to the very city where he hoped to seize the victims of his cruel bigotry, when the Lord Jesus Christ arrested him in his mad career, and by his special grace converted him to the faith which he was labouring to destroy[a]. It is further observable, that he alone of all the party heard the voice that spake to him, though they beheld the light which shined with preternatural splendor round about them[b]: and he alone of all the party, as far as we know, was converted unto God. What was there in his spirit and conduct that *merited* such a merciful distinction? Or to what can we refer this mercy but to the free and sovereign

[a] Acts xxii. 4—8. [b] ib. ver. 9.

reign grace of God? Here we are compelled to acknowledge an election altogether of grace: and in this interpretation of the event we are fully justified by the assertion of St. Paul, who traces it to a determination of the Deity long previous to the period when it took place, even to a fore-ordained "separation of him from his mother's womb[c]."

Through *the whole of his subsequent life* the mercies vouchsafed to him must be traced to the same source. All his eminent attainments, and all his super-abundant labours, were fruits of the same electing love, and the same effectual grace. This he confessed to the latest hour of his life: he declared, that "in him, that is, in his flesh, dwelt no good thing[d];" and that his sufficiency even for so much as a good thought was altogether of God alone[e]. And in reference to this truth he displayed in the passage before us a peculiar jealousy: for being, in vindication of himself, constrained to say, that he had laboured more abundantly than any other of the Apostles, he adds with holy jealousy for the honour of his God, "yet not I;" "yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me[f]."

Thus, to say the least, respecting the apostle Paul the assertion in our text was true, "By the grace of God he was what he was." But]

2. It is true with respect to us also—

[What is the state of every man previous to his conversion? Are we not all "dead in trespasses and sins?" Have we not a "carnal mind that is enmity against God?" Do we not "walk according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind?" and are we not all "children of wrath, even as others?" What then is there in us that can operate as a motive with God to bestow his grace upon us rather than upon others? It is clear enough, that the same word which operates effectually on some to the conversion of their souls, produces on others no other effect than that of exciting greater hostility against the Gospel[g]. To what can this be ascribed but to the sovereign grace of God, whose gifts are his own, and who divideth to every man severally as he will? It is also plain, that many under less advantageous circumstances are turned from the power of Satan unto God, whilst others, with far greater advantages, are left still in bondage to sin and Satan: And what other account can be given of this, than that which our Lord himself supplies, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight[h]?"

During the whole remainder of our lives it is the same grace

[c] Gal. i. 15.
[d] Rom. vii. 18.
[e] 2 Cor. iii. 5.
[f] ver. 10.
[g] Acts xviii. 6—8
[h] Matt. xi. 25, 26.

grace which operates even to the end. Demas apostatizes; and Luke perseveres[i]: Peter repents; and Judas commits suicide: Blessed Saviour, who would not prove chaff, if thou didst leave him to be sifted by his great adversary? and whose faith would not fail, if thou didst not intercede for him in the hour of trial[k]? If any one of us be kept unto salvation, it is by thy power and grace alone[l]: thou, who hast been "the Author of our faith, must also be the Finisher[m]:" and, when the head-stone of thy spiritual temple shall be brought forth, we must cry, "Grace, grace unto it[n]."

Thus in our own case, as well as in the Apostle's, the glory of all that is good must be given to God alone; who "hath loved us with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness hath he drawn us[o]."]

But from the speculative view of the Apostle's assertion, let us proceed to notice it,

II. As a practical acknowledgement—

Speculation is of no further value than as it leads to practical results. But the forementioned truth is discarded by many under the idea of its being replete with injury to the souls of men. In its source, it is supposed to spring from pride; and in its tendency, to lead to a total disregard of all moral virtue. Let us then inquire into,

1. Its source—

[Does it indeed proceed from pride? Those who cannot endure the thought of God's sovereignty, will affirm confidently that it does: and in reference to all who maintain the doctrine of election, they will exclaim, "These men fancy themselves the special favourites of heaven." But let me ask, Who are the proud: they who acknowledge themselves to be only as parts of one vast mass of clay, of which the potter, agreeably to his own sovereign will, and for the praise of the glory of his own grace, has taken a part, to form of it a vessel of honour for his own use[p]; or those who assert that they were selected because they were of a finer quality than the mass that was left behind? Who are the proud; they who say with the Apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am;" or those who say, "By my own strength, and on account of my own superior goodness, I am what I am?" Who, I say, are the proud; they who accept heaven solely as the free

[i] Compare Col. iv. 14. with 2 Tim. iv. 10, 11.
[k] Luke xxii. 31, 32. [l] 1 Pet. i. 5. [m] Heb. xii. 2.
[n] Zech. iv. 7. [o] Jer. xxxi. 3. [p] Rom. ix. 21.

free gift of God in Christ Jesus; or they who expect to purchase it at a price which they themselves shall pay? The belief of the doctrines of predestination and election is not founded in pride, but in humility, and in a deep conviction that we *are* nothing, and *have* nothing, and *can do* nothing, but what of itself deserves God's wrath and indignation. It is the denial of these doctrines that proceeds from pride; because it argues a conceit that we have something originally, and of ourselves, which *merits* the distinction that we hope for in a future world, and to which our ultimate salvation must, in part at least, if not altogether, be ascribed. Will any man say that Paul was actuated by pride, when he said, "Whom God did predestinate, them he also called, and justified, and glorified[q]?" ——— No man ever had a higher sense of the dignity conferred upon him, than Paul had: nor had ever man a deeper sense of his own unworthiness: "I am less than the least of all saints:" "I am nothing[r]." And the more deeply we feel our unworthiness, the more cordially shall we acquiesce in his humiliating statements of the freeness and sovereignty of Divine grace.]

2. Its tendency—

[A belief of these doctrines, it is supposed, will produce a laxness in morals. But was the Apostle regardless of morality? or is a deeper sense of obligation to God likely to produce in any mind a less disposition to fulfil his will? Surely its proper tendency is the very reverse of this, even to foster in us every holy disposition towards both God and man.

Towards God—a sense of our entire dependence on his sovereign will, and of our obligation to his sovereign grace, will excite a feeling of gratitude, such as Paul speaks of, when he says, "The love of Christ constraineth me." "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" is the question which every one will ask, when once he sees, that "not according to any works of righteousness that we have done, but of his own mercy he has saved us[s]." If once we have a good hope, that we are of "the chosen generation, and of God's peculiar people," we shall exert ourselves to shew forth in every possible way the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light[t]."

Towards man also will these sentiments operate in the most favourable way that can be imagined. A sense of God's electing love will fill us with compassion towards those who are ignorant and out of the way. We shall not, like the proud Pharisee, despise others, but pity them; we shall not say,

[q] Rom. viii. 30. See also Eph. i. 4—6. 9, 11. & 2 Tim. i. 9.
[r] Eph. iii. 8. 2 Cor. xii. 11. [s] Tit. iii. 4, 5.
[t] 1 Pet. ii. 9.

say, "Stand off, I am holier than thou;" but shall bear in mind, who it is that has made us to differ even from the most abandoned of mankind[u]. And, if a brother fall, we shall not exult over him, but shall endeavour rather to restore him in meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted[x].

We will readily grant that there are many truly pious, and even eminent, Christians, who do not embrace *systematically*, and *in profession*, the doctrines of predestination and election: but no pious man will ever arrogate *merit* to himself, or make himself *the first moving cause* of his own salvation. There is not a saint either in heaven or earth who will not cordially and from his inmost soul confess, "By the grace of God I am what I am." And, if only the whole glory of our salvation be given to God alone, we are not anxious to press the matter farther, or to insist on terms which they are not willing to admit: if only from their souls they unite in the practical acknowledgement of our text, we will be content to leave the speculative points deduced from it to the judgment of the great day.]

Before we close the subject, we will yet farther notice what it contains—

1. For our instruction—

[The Apostle ascribed his privileges and attainments to the grace of God: "By the grace of God I am what I am." What then must they do who are yet afar off from God, and have no part with the Apostle either in his privileges or attainments? Let them seek grace from God: let them not trust in their own goodness or strength, but look simply to the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom "they may both obtain mercy, and find samples of grace to help them in the time of need." If only they will renounce all dependence on themselves, they shall receive from the God of all grace a sufficiency for all their wants.]

2. For our encouragement—

[Who is it that utters the acknowledgement in our text? What, Saul! Saul the blasphemer; Saul the persecutor? Yes, it is even so. But tell us, Paul, What thou didst to obtain this grace? Didst thou not earn it? No. Didst thou not merit it? No. Didst thou not even seek it? No. And yet it was given thee? Yes, when I was in the very act of fighting against God with all my might. Then, who shall despair? Who shall say, The grace of God can never reach me; or, If given, can never operate effectually in me? Verily, no man on this side the grave has any reason to despair. Hear

[u] 1 Cor. iv. 7. [x] Gal. vi. 1.

Hear what the Apostle says: he tells us that God's particular design in so converting him was, to keep all others from despair; and to make him a pattern and example of his long-suffering to all future generations[y]. Hear this, ye who are ready to entertain desponding fears; and know assuredly, that God's grace is his own; that he may give it to whomsoever he will; and that there is not a creature in the universe for whom it shall not be effectual, if he will but seek it in sincerity and truth.]

[y] 1 Tim. i. 16.

DCCCCLXXV.

THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

1 Cor. xv. 17, 18. *If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins: then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.*

THE wisest among the Heathen Philosophers could not speak with any certainty respecting the future existence of the soul: they could only form conjectures respecting it; so little could unassisted reason do towards the ascertaining of this most important point. As for the resurrection of the body, they deemed it ridiculous and absurd; and considered it as impossible that atoms, so widely dispersed and so variously combined, should ever be reduced to their original form. The Gospel, however, has brought life and immortality to light; and assured us, not only that every soul shall exist in a future world, but that the bodies of men also shall rise out of their graves, and be re-united each to that very soul that once inhabited it. Nevertheless, some, who made a profession of Christianity, were still blinded by the prejudices which they had formerly imbibed. Hence they explained the doctrine of the Resurrection in a figurative manner; and said, that it was passed already. The Apostle, therefore, set himself to counteract this dangerous delusion, by proving that there should indeed be a resurrection of the body. This he proved from what was fully believed among them, the resurrection of Christ: he shewed, that, if Christ was actually risen, there could be no reason why we should not rise in like manner; but that, on the contrary, his resurrection was a pattern

a pattern and an earnest of ours. In order to give additional weight to this argument, he proves incontestibly that Christ himself had risen: he proves it, I say, by an appeal to numberless living witnesses who had seen him: and then he sets before them three most tremendous consequences which would follow, on a supposition that he was not risen: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins; then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." This argument of the Apostle's being of the greatest importance, we will endeavour,

I. To confirm;
II. To improve it.

I. To confirm his argument—It consists of three parts, which he mentions as consequences that will follow from a denial of Christ's resurrection—

1. If Christ be not risen, *our faith is vain*—

The Christian, as long as he is in the world, is called to the exercise of faith: he walks by faith, and not by sight: he lives upon a Saviour whom he has never seen with his bodily eyes, and receives a supply of every want out of his fulness. By faith we view Jesus as a *Surety*: we consider him as having discharged our debt: this is the ground on which we hope that our sins shall never be put to our account. We believe what the Scripture says, that "it was exacted of him and he was made answerable;" and that his death was a sufficient compensation for the debt which we had incurred. But what proof have we that he has paid the debt, if he be not risen? We may suppose that he undertook to pay it, and that he laid down his life in order to pay it; but this will by no means prove that he has fully satisfied the demands of law and justice. If a man that has become our surety remain in prison, it is a sign that he has not made good the payment which he had taken upon himself; but if he be set free, we then conclude that the creditors have been satisfied. So, if Christ had yet been confined in the prison of the grave, we might have concluded that the debt was yet unpaid; and consequently, our faith in him as our Surety would have been vain

and

and delusive: for, notwithstanding all which Jesus might have done for us, there would yet have remained some part of the debt to be discharged by us, and we must therefore have despaired of ever obtaining happiness in the eternal world.

Again: By faith we view Jesus as an *Advocate*. We are still offending daily in many things; so that, notwithstanding we have been reconciled to God, we should soon provoke him to withdraw his mercy from us, and to shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure. But the Scripture says, that, "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." By faith, we look to him to intercede for us; to plead our cause; and to maintain our peace with God. But what ground have we for such an hope if Christ be not risen? Instead of being in heaven to plead our cause, he still lies in the bowels of the earth: instead of living to promote our interests, he is no better than a senseless and inanimate corpse. How vain therefore must be our expectations, when we indulge the thought of his prevailing intercessions! We are but buoying up ourselves with groundless hopes, and weaving a web which shall soon be swept away by the besom of destruction.

Once more:—By faith we view Jesus as a *Head* of all vital influences. The Scripture speaks of him as the vine, and us as the branches; and represents him as "Head over all things to the Church." We look therefore to him that we may receive out of his fulness: we expect grace and peace from him to be communicated to us in the hour of need: we consider ourselves as withered branches, when separated from him, and as no longer having a capacity to bring forth any fruit than while we are united to him, and derive sap and nourishment from him. But what a delusion must this be, if Christ be not risen! If he be not risen, he is still dead: and how can that which is destitute of life impart life to us? What can we possibly receive from him if he be still imprisoned in the grave? We see, then, that whether we regard him as our Surety, our Advocate, or our Head, our faith is vain if he be not risen; yea, we are left

left under the most deplorable error and delusion that ever engrossed the mind of man.

The next consequence that would follow upon a denial of Christ's resurrection would be, that *we should be yet in our sins.*

It is the Believer's privilege to be free from sin, and to stand in the presence of God without spot or blemish. But this removal of his sins depends upon various circumstances, which are grounded upon the resurrection of Christ.

In the first place, the removal of our sins depends on the truth of our Lord's Mission: and the truth of his Mission stands or falls with his resurrection. Our Lord constantly spoke of his resurrection on the third day as the grand proof which should be given of his Divine Mission. Whether he spoke to friends or enemies, still this he proposed as the test whereby to try the truth of all he said; insomuch that his enemies were peculiarly solicitous to prevent, if possible, the accomplishment of these predictions; knowing that, if they should be fulfilled, the authority of his Mission would be fully established. Now let us suppose for a moment that Christ had not risen, what must we have concluded? Surely, that he was an impostor; that he had deceived his followers by specious pretences; and that, so far from being able to remove our guilt, he perished under the weight of his own most accumulated wickedness.

Again: The removal of our sins depends *on the acceptance of his sacrifice.* He offered himself as a sacrifice to God, in order that he might expiate our offences; and on the acceptance of this, our eternal happiness depends: if God receive it as an offering of a sweet-smelling savour, we may hope he will be propitious to us on account of it; but if he do not declare himself well pleased with it, we are left altogether without a remedy. Now how shall it be known whether God has accepted it or not? If we are to judge by the circumstances of our Lord's death, we should rather conclude that the Father took no pleasure in him, since our Lord himself so bitterly complained of the dereliction which

he

he experienced in the very hour of his extremity. We must judge therefore by his resurrection: and that this was to be the test, is evident from the sacrifices which were under the law. It was not consistent with the Divine will that the beasts that were sacrificed should be restored to life; but yet this was done in a figure: for one goat was slain to expiate sin by his blood; and another goat was sent away into the wilderness, laden with the iniquities of all the people. So when birds were offered; one was slain, and another was dipped in the blood of that which was slain, and then let loose into the air. These were types of our Saviour, who was first to be slain, and then to be raised from the dead, and ascend into the highest heavens; and if he had not risen, we should have had no proof whatever that his sacrifice was accepted. Yet on the acceptance of this sacrifice the removal of our sins entirely depended; so that if Christ be not risen, we must be yet in our sins.

Once more: The removal of our sins depends on *our Lord's execution of his office.* Our Lord undertook the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; and though he did in part fulfil these offices on earth, yet he fulfilled them only in part—the principal accomplishment of them remained to take place after he should be seated in heaven: he was *then*, as the great Prophet of the Church, to reveal the will of God more fully, and to teach by his Spirit those, who, for want of a divine illumination, could not comprehend the truths he had delivered. As the great *High Priest*, he was to enter within the veil: it was not sufficient that the High Priest offered the sacrifice on the day of atonement. He was moreover to carry the blood into the Holy of Holies, to sprinkle it on the mercy-seat, to offer incense, and then to come out and bless the people. So, our Lord was under a necessity of rising again, that he might enter into heaven with his own blood, that he might there present it before the mercy-seat; and that, after offering the incense of his continual intercession, he might, in due time, come forth to bless the people. As a *King* also, he had only as yet asserted his kingly office and authority: it was necessary therefore that he should

should go to the right hand of God, and there sit till all his enemies should be made his footstool. Now, if he did not rise, he cannot execute any of these offices; and yet upon the execution of them depends the removal of our sins; so then, if he be not risen, we are yet in our sins.

We see therefore, that, as the removal of our sins depends on *the truth of his Mission, the acceptance of his sacrifice*, and *the execution of his offices*; and as all these depend on his resurrection; we must, if he be not risen, be yet in our sins.

A third consequence that would follow from the denial of Christ's resurrection is, that they also who *have fallen asleep in Christ are perished*. Death to the Believer is only as a sleep; it has lost its sting: and as he commends himself to the Divine protection when he lies down upon his bed, so he commits his departing spirit into his Saviour's hands, and falls asleep in Christ; and while his body lies mouldering in the dust, his soul is carried by angels into Abraham's bosom: but if Christ be not risen, all who from the beginning of the world have fallen asleep in Christ have perished: either their souls have been annihilated at their separation from the body; or rather they have become the monuments of God's wrath and indignation.

For, in the first place, *all that have fallen asleep in Christ, have, on a supposition that Christ is not risen, built their hopes on a sandy foundation*. They have relied wholly on the merit of Christ's blood, and expected justification only through his obedience unto death: and, as they have trusted in his righteousness, so have they gloried in his strength; not going forth against any enemy, but in his name, and in reliance upon his grace: nor have they trusted in any thing but in his continual intercession for maintaining their peace with God. In short, they have made Christ their only foundation, on whom they have built all their hopes. Now if Christ be not risen, that foundation has failed them, and consequently all the superstructure must fall to the ground: so that, notwithstanding all their affiance in him, they are perished; yea, though they

they committed their departing spirits into his hands, they were not saved: for he could not help them; he could not hear their prayer: in trusting to him they trusted only to a broken reed, which now pierces them through with unutterable and everlasting anguish.

Again: If Christ be not risen, they are perished; *because, however zealous they were of good works, their works were not sufficient to justify them before God.* We cannot indeed conceive more eminent piety than Abraham discovered in leaving his country and sacrificing his own son; or than David manifested in his incessant praises and thanksgivings; or than Stephen shewed when laying down his life for Christ, and praying for his murderers. And yet behold what the text asserts; "they all are perished if Christ be not risen." The reason is plain: they were trangressors of God's law; as transgressors, they were subject to the curse and condemnation of the law; nor could any thing less than an infinitely valuable atonement remove that curse. In vain they prayed; in vain they strove; in vain they endeavoured to do the will of God; in vain they laid down their lives for his sake; they were under the curse; and cursed they must be, if Christ did not become their Saviour. But he could not be a Saviour to them if he did not rise; and therefore, if he be not risen, they are all, without exception, perished. They are perished; first, because their foundation failed them; and next, because, *that* having failed, no hope remained to them from any thing which they themselves could do. It is now plain, I trust, that the consequences which the Apostle states as following a denial of our Lord's resurrection are true, and that his argument is strictly just. Having therefore confirmed his argument, we proceed,

II. To improve it—

It will be to little purpose to know the force of the Apostle's reasoning, unless we deduce from it those practical inferences which may bring it home to our hearts and consciences.

First, then, We may see from hence *how ignorant they are that seek salvation by works!*

The generality of mankind are hoping to be saved for something

something which they have done, or something which they intend to do: indeed even those who have lived in all manner of evil tempers and sensual indulgences are yet often so blind, as to be the most strenuous in contending for the merit of good works, and in crying out against those who speak of salvation by faith. But do these people fancy themselves wiser and better than all the saints of old? Will any one say that Stephen was not an eminently pious man? Was he not chosen out by the people, because he was full of faith and the Holy Ghost? Was he not endued with peculiar gifts, insomuch that his adversaries could not resist the spirit and wisdom with which he spake? Did he not also manifest a peculiar excellence of disposition? Did he not with all fidelity charge the people's sins upon them? and, when they were in the very act of stoning him, did he not, after the example of our Lord, pray for his murderers? Did he not willingly seal the truth with his blood? Was he not so highly honoured of God that his face was made to shine like the face of an angel? and was he not, even while in the body, favoured with a sight of God, and of Christ, as standing at the right-hand of God? Say now, Where shall we find a man that bids more fair to be saved by his works than he? yet *was* he saved by his works? or *could* he be saved by his works? No. Notwithstanding all his works, he needed the blood of Christ to cleanse him from sin: he needed Christ, as his Advocate and Strength, his Saviour and his all; and if Christ be not in a capacity to save him, he is perished. Nor have his works availed him any thing more than to lessen in some degree the condemnation he would otherwise have endured. Who then art thou that seekest to be justified by thy works? 'Art thou as eminent as Stephen? if not, how canst thou hope to be saved, when even he, if he had no better ground of confidence than his own works, must have perished? Or suppose that thou wert as good as he, still thou must meet with the same fate; thou must perish, and that eternally, if thou rely on any thing but a crucified and exalted Saviour. Oh, then, blush at your ignorance, ye proud, self-justifying sinners! See how Satan has

has blinded your eyes! See how far ye are from the way of salvation! Oh, let me beseech you for Christ's sake, and for your soul's sake, to renounce all your self-righteous hopes and endeavours, and to rely on him who alone can save you, and who is able to save you to the uttermost.

Secondly. We may see from hence how miserable is the state of Unbelievers!

By Unbelievers, we mean, not only those who deliberately reject Christ, but all who do not actually enjoy an interest in him. Now these persons, whatever they may think of themselves, and however they may bless themselves because of the abundance of earthly things which they possess, are in as miserable a state as can well be conceived: for, as they have no interest in Christ, it is eventually the same to them as if he had never risen; only with this difference, that their guilt is much greater by neglecting the Saviour, than it could have been without such an aggravation. What then is their state? precisely that mentioned in the text; "their faith, as far as they have any, is all vain:" even though they assent to all which is spoken concerning Christ, 'tis all in vain: "They are yet in their sins;" all the load of their iniquities lies upon them, and the curse of God hangeth over their devoted head. They will also "perish" whenever they die; there cannot possibly be any admission for them into heaven; perish they must; and remain for ever the monuments of God's displeasure. And now say, Is not this a miserable state? What though a man have a large estate, can that make him happy? What though he have a form of godliness, can that make him happy? No: he must have an interest in Christ, or he will be a poor miserable wretch for ever. Oh! my Brethren, seek an interest in this risen Saviour: think of him, not only as dying for your offences, but as risen again for your justification: and be assured, that, as you shall be reconciled to God by the death of his Son, so, much more, being reconciled, you shall be saved by his life. Do not conclude too hastily that you have an interest in the Saviour: see whether you are "risen with him through a faith of the operation of God?" and never

rest till you can say, "I know in whom I have believed."

Lastly. We see from hence how happy is the state of true Believers! The resurrection of Christ, which is the foundation of all their hopes, is proved beyond a possibility of doubt: the very means taken to conceal it are among the most convincing proofs of its reality. On the very same basis, your hopes are founded: he has said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Think then with yourselves, that at this moment, your faith, so far from being in vain, avails for all the purposes for which it is exercised: it secures your interest in Christ as your Surety, Advocate, and Head; and brings in an abundance of all spiritual blessings to your soul. Instead of being in your sins, they are put away from you as far as the East is from the West; nor shall they evermore be remembered against you. God has already said concerning every such soul, as he did concerning Joshua; "Take away the filthy garments from him: behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I *will* clothe thee with change of raiment." Further—When you die, you will not perish with the ungodly world, but will go to take possession of a "kingdom." You will have a crown of glory on your head, and a golden harp in your hand: you will be seated on your Saviour's throne; and shall sing his praises for evermore. Happy soul! "what manner of love is this wherewith the Father hath loved thee!" Hail thou that art highly favoured of the Lord! Rejoice, rejoice, thou servant of the Most High God! Thy Saviour, possessed of all power in heaven and in earth, watches over thee continually: he gives his angels charge over thee: he gives thee every thing that is for thy good: and though perhaps he deals with thee not exactly as thou mightest wish, he is daily preparing thee for glory, and making thee meet for thine inheritance. Oh, then, love and serve this risen Saviour; and set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Let it be your endeavour to keep your conversation in heaven: and while you are living upon the Saviour's fulness, oh, strive to live to the glory of his name. Thus will you adorn

adorn your holy profession; and when he shall come again to receive you to himself, he will welcome you with these delightful words, "Come, thou blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for thee, from the foundation of the world!"

DCCCCLXXVI.

DEATH A CONQUERED ENEMY.

1 Cor. xv. 51—58. *Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

THE doctrine of the Resurrection was altogether unknown to the Heathen world, and but imperfectly known even to the Jews themselves. The idea of bodies, once mouldered into dust and scattered over the face of the earth, being ever restored, and reunited to their kindred souls, appeared so visionary, as to be wholly inadmissible and incredible. But St. Paul shews, that the Resurrection of our blessed Lord was a fact established beyond the possibility of doubt; and that he had risen "as the first-fruits," which would assuredly be followed by an universal harvest[a]. True it was that a great change would take place in the body, such as was necessary to fit it for its future state of existence: but still it would be the same body in reality, just as the wheat, which, when sown in the ground, first dies, and then rises substantially

[a] ver. 20, 23.

substantially the same, though in a very different form[b]. To the question, What shall be done with those who shall be living upon the earth at the last day? He answers, That they shall undergo a change equivalent to death and resurrection: and the manner in which this shall be effected he represents as a mystery, which in former ages had been wholly unknown, but which from inspiration he was now enabled to proclaim. However death had seemed hitherto to triumph over the many successive generations that had existed upon earth, there should at last be an end of his reign, and he himself should be triumphed over by all who belong to Christ.

That we may all have a fuller view of this mystery, we will endeavour to shew,

I. The victory that awaits the Christian—

Christians, like others, appear to be overcome by death—

[They, as well others, yield to the stroke of death. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, all have died: two only of all the Children of men have been exempted from the common lot: and the time is quickly coming when every one of us must die; (for the body is dead because of sin[c];") and must "return to the dust" from whence we sprang[d].]

But in due time they shall assuredly triumph over it—

[It is the body only that death can reach: it cannot affect the Believer's soul: and it is for a time only that it can affect the body. When once the last day shall arrive, there will be an end of that empire which death has so widely extended. The bodies of the saints, of whom alone the Apostle here speaks, shall then be raised up, and with varied degrees of splendor shine forth anew[e]. They were sown in corruption, weakness, and dishonour, and they shall be raised in incorruption, power, and glory: from natural bodies, they shall be transformed to spiritual[f], each one shining forth, as our Saviour himself at his transfiguration, like the sun in the firmament for ever and ever[g]. Thenceforth shall "death have no more dominion over them," any more than it has over our Lord himself[h]: on the contrary, it shall itself "be swallowed up

[b] ver. 35—38. [e] Rom. viii. 10.
[d] Gen. iii. 19. [e] ver. 41.
[f] ver. 42—44. [g] Compare Matt. xiii. 43. with xvii. 2.
[h] Rom. vi. 9. with Rev. xxi. 4.

up in victory," as the Prophet has said[i], and, as the Apostle elsewhere speaks, "Mortality shall be swallowed up of life[k]."

By those also who shall be living at the time of our Lord's advent, shall the same triumph be enjoyed. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye shall they be changed, as soon as ever the last trump shall sound:" as, in the case of those who have died, "corruptible shall put on incorruption," so, in those who shall be found alive, "their mortal shall put on immortality[l]," and "their vile body shall in an instant be made like unto Christ's glorious body[m]," even to that very body in which he now sits enthroned in glory, the blessed object of adoration to all the hosts of heaven.]

That the Christian may be encouraged the more confidently to look forward to that victory, we proceed to shew,

II. How it is that he is assured of it—

It is sin that gives death its power—

[If sin had never entered into the world, death would never have existed, or would have been only a translation from earth to heaven. This is plainly told us by St. Paul; "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, even upon those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression[n]." The law which passed the sentence of death on Adam[o], still says to every Child of man, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." And this law cannot be set aside: it is as immutable as God himself: and hence it is that sin is itself so powerful, and invests death also with such power over our fallen race.].

But the Lord Jesus Christ has taken away our sin—

[He has put himself in our place and stead, and, as our Surety, has satisfied all the demands of the law. Did the law require the death of the offender? He has put himself in the place of sinners, and has borne the penalty for them. Would sin yet prevail to destroy the soul? He has expiated its guilt, and put "away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Must every one have a perfect righteousness before he can appear in the presence of a holy God? Christ has not only "made an end of sin, but by his obedience unto death has brought in an everlasting righteousness[p]," which "he imputes to all them that believe[q]." Thus is death disarmed of its sting:

[i] Isai. xxv. 8.
[k] 2 Cor. v. 4.
[l] ver. 52, 53.
[m] Phil. i. 21.
[n] Rom. v. 12, 14. with ver. 21, 22.
[o] Gen. ii. 17.
[p] Dan. ix. 24.
[q] Rom. iii. 22.

sting; for sin, which was its sting, is cancelled; and the law, from which sin derived its strength, is fulfilled: and the sentence denounced against us is reversed, so far at least as it is penal; insomuch that "God may now be just, and yet the justifier of sinful men[r]."]

Thus is death disarmed of its power—

[Death, no longer envenomed by sin, is to be regarded only as a sleep, "a falling asleep in Jesus." This "enemy," this "king of terrors," is turned into a friend, and may now be numbered amongst the richest treasures of the Christian[s]. If we view it aright, it is only *a friend who comes to draw aside the veil that hides the Saviour and all his glory from our eyes.* What a blessed thought! O Christian, what joy should this thought impart unto thy soul! with what transport shouldest thou exclaim, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Come forward, Christian; put thy foot upon the neck of this conquered enemy: exult over him, as God himself instructs thee, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Where are now thy boasted triumphs? Instead of swallowing up me, thou shalt be swallowed up; and instead of casting me into the lake of fire, thou thyself shalt have that for thine only and unchangeable abode[t].]

Such is the victory that awaits thee. Think then,

III. What exertions the prospect of it should call forth—

Let the expectation of this triumph stimulate thee to prepare for it. Prepare for it by

1. A stedfast adherence to the faith—

[Much will thy faith be tried: temptations from without and from within will assuredly assault thee: perhaps even the glorious truths contained in our text may be wrested from thee by thy great adversary, so that thou shalt be led to question the reality of them, or thine interest in them. But "be stedfast, and immoveable;" "holding fast the profession of thy faith without wavering." "Fight the good fight of faith:" "quit thyself like a man:" Whoever would "move thee from the hope of the Gospel," withstand him: Whoever would turn thee aside from the right path, or discourage thee in running thy heavenly race, regard him not; but "run on with patience, looking unto Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of thy faith."]

2. A diligent performance of thy duty—

[The

[r] Rom. iii. 26. [s] 1 Cor. iii. 22. [t] Rev. xx. 14.

[The Lord has given thee a work to do: Oh! engage in it with all thy heart. Has he assigned thee any office whereby thou mayest be useful in advancing his kingdom in the world? "Give thyself wholly to it." Do the interests of thine own soul call for thine attention? "Forget all that is behind, and press forward for that which is before." Be not content with small measures of service; but seek to "abound in the work of the Lord;" and *this*, not on some particular occasions only, but "always," from day to day, and from year to year, "never being weary in well-doing," but exerting yourselves the more, in proportion as your time for performing it is cut short. Think what is that work where you may best serve and glorify your Lord; and "make it your meat and drink to do it:" yea, whatever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might."]

3. An assured expectation of thy reward—

[Moses himself, "looked to the recompence of the reward," as did also the martyrs of old, who "refused to accept deliverance from their tortures, that they might obtain a better resurrection." If you had no prospect of future happiness, there would be some reason for that Epicurean maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But when you consider how short your present trials are, and how rich will be the recompence for all your labours, it were madness to draw back. Look at those who have already entered into their Rest, and ask, Whether they repent of their former labours: or look at the glory that awaits thee, and then think whether the possession of it will not richly compensate all that thou canst do or suffer for thy Lord. "The Lord is not unrighteous, that he will forget your works and labours of love:" No: he has said, that "you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the dead;" and he will with his own hand bestow the recompence: "nor shall even a cup of cold water given for his sake lose its reward."]

ADDRESS—

[Happy should we be, if death had this aspect upon all, and we had no occasion to change our voice in relation to it. But to the ungodly it is still an enemy: and over the unbelieving it will retain its dominion to all eternity. Yes, Brethren; If we have not sought refuge in Christ from the curses of the broken law, we are yet in our sins, and must perish under the guilt of them for evermore. Is this your case? how terrible then must the thought of death be to you! To you, it will be as the opening of the prison doors to a criminal, that he may be led forth to execution. For a season indeed, your body shall sleep in the dust: but in what image shall it rise in the last

last day? What will be its feelings, when it shall be re-occupied by the soul, that now claims it as the partner of its former sins, and of all its future sorrows! How glad would it be, if it could take its position under rocks and mountains! Even now, the thought of death is terrible to the unbelieving soul, and the contemplation of eternity distressing. But let it not be always thus; let what you have heard of the Christian's privileges stir you up to seek a participation of them. Remember, how it is that death must be disarmed of its sting: it is altogether by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as having fulfilled the law for you, and taken away your sins by the blood of his cross. Only look to him as dying for your sins, and rising again for your justification, and all shall yet be well: your souls shall live before him; "because he liveth, you shall live also:" and when he who is your life shall appear, "ye also shall appear with him in glory."

But to those who profess to believe in Christ, we would also suggest a salutary caution. If the prospect of a glorious resurrection produce not its due effect upon you, you have reason to doubt whether you have indeed an inheritance beyond the grave. It is only in proportion as your faith is operative, that you can have any evidence of its being the "faith of God's elect." And how painful will it be, when on the verge of eternity, to have your soul harassed with doubts and fears about your eternal state! Do not, I beseech you, walk so carelessly as to endanger your final acceptance with God, or to make it doubtful to your own mind. What can be the effect of sin, but to fill your dying pillow with thorns? Never then trifle either with sin or duty: let the one be put away from you with all care, and the other be practised with all diligence: and seek of God the aid of his good spirit, that you may so live as to enjoy the testimony of your own conscience, and so walk, "that you may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless."]

DCCCCLXXVII.

THE TRIALS AND CONSOLATIONS OF MINISTERS USEFUL TO THEIR PEOPLE.

2 Cor. i. 3, 4. *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

THE former Epistle to the Corinthians abounded with

with reproofs, for which indeed there was in that Church but too much occasion. This Epistle is altogether of a different kind, and contains a rich fund of paternal and most affectionate instruction. In the opening of it, St. Paul quite forgets all the pain and sorrow which they had occasioned him, and blesses God for the consolations he enjoyed, especially in the view of those blessed effects which had been produced upon their minds by his former letter[a]. How "full of comfort" he was, we may judge from the frequent repetition of the word "comfort;" he knew not how to leave the subject, or to vary his expression: his whole soul appears to have been swallowed up in the contemplation of the comfort which he had received from God, and which he hoped to be the means of communicating to them also.

That we may enter into the spirit of his words, let us notice—

I. His representation of the Deity—

In the Old Testament, Jehovah was known as "the God of Abraham;" but in the New Testament, he is exhibited under a yet more endearing character, as "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." Observe here,

1. His relation to Christ—

[There is in the Godhead a distinction between the Three Persons of the ever blessed Trinity; the first Person is called the Father; the second Person, the Son; and the third Person is called the Holy Ghost. The Son is said to be "the only-begotten of the Father:" but of this inscrutable mystery it were in vain to speak, since we should only "darken counsel by words without knowledge." It is sufficient for us to know, that such a distinction in the Godhead does exist, and that, in this sense, God was, from all eternity, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Of the manhood of Christ, formed as it was by Omnipotence without the intervention of man, God may in a more definite sense be said to have been the Father: and in reference

[a] Chap. vii. 4—7.

reference to this, his miraculous conception in a virgin's womb, Jesus was especially designated "the Son of God[b]."

In his Mediatorial capacity also, as "Emmanuel, God with us," our Lord Jesus Christ stands in covenant relation to God, as a Son to a Father; agreeably to what he himself says, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God[c]."

Now, as all the children of Israel claimed a special interest in Jehovah as being the Seed of Abraham whose God he was, so we, who look to Jesus as our common Head and Saviour, are entitled to consider *his* God as *our* God, since we are in him as members of his mystical body, and are altogether "one spirit with him." And, as Jesus is infinitely greater in himself, and more dear to God, than ever Abraham was, our interest in God, by virtue of our union with Jesus, is proportionably greater and more endeared.]

2. His relation to us—

[To us, who are involved in the deepest guilt and misery, he is revealed as "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." What remarkable expressions are these! There is not a mercy which we enjoy, but it must be traced to him as its proper source; nor is there a mercy which we want, but it may be found in him to the utmost extent of our necessities. Nothing but mercy properly flows from him: "judgment is his strange act," which is never called forth, till mercy has been as it were exhausted. Judgments are his *servants*; but mercies are his *children*, in whom is all his delight[d]. As for comfort, he is the God of it, "the God of all comfort." Were his will complied with, there would be nothing but comfort in the whole universe: it would flow from him as light from the sun; so free, so rich, so abundant would be his communications of it to every soul. Let the afflicted, of every name and every class, only go to him, and he will approve himself "the comforter of all them that are cast down," and "the God of that particular comfort" which they need; as if all his perfections and all his powers centered in that point alone, and were exerted to their utmost extent for the relief of their particular wants.

Such is the view which we should at all times have of the Deity. If we regard him only as a Lawgiver and a Judge, we have no better apprehensions of him than Satan himself has. It is our privilege to know him, not merely in the terrors of his majesty, but in all the endearments of his love and mercy.]

With

[b] Luke i. 35. [c] John xx. 17. Acts xiii. 33. [d] Mic. vii. 18.

With this beautiful description of the Deity the Apostle combines,

II. His thanksgiving to him—

Great and manifold were the tribulations which he was called to sustain—

[The whole world, both of Jews and Gentiles, seemed to be confederate against him. Every man, with the exception of those who were converted by his Ministry, was his enemy, and sought his destruction; insomuch that he was in daily, and hourly, expectation of a violent death[e]. From the Church itself too he endured much. The false brethren, who laboured incessantly to undermine his influence, and to create dissentions in the Church, were a source of continual sorrow to his mind. Nor was he free from internal trials also, which caused him great uneasiness. What "the thorn in his flesh" was, we do not exactly know: but he regarded it as a "messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him;" nor could he find any relief from the anguish it occasioned, till he was assured, in answer to his repeated and earnest cries, "that a sufficiency of grace" should be imparted to him, and that "Christ's strength should be perfected in his weakness."

Not that these trials were peculiar to him: he felt them indeed in a more abundant measure than others; but every faithful Minister in his measure experiences the same. Who that is zealous for his God does not incur the hatred of an ungodly world? Who that has long ministered in holy things has not had occasion to deplore the fall of some, the apostacy of others, and the little progress of almost all; insomuch that with many he is made to "travail, as it were, in birth a second time, till Christ be formed in them?" Some perhaps, who would once have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him, are now "become his enemies, because he has told them the truth," and reproved them for their reigning and besetting sins. And in himself also every Minister will find abundant occasion to sigh and mourn, especially when he reflects on his great insufficiency for the work assigned him, and the effects of his unprofitableness upon the souls of others.]

But he had rich consolations to counterbalance his afflictions—

[It was no small comfort to the Apostle that his trials were endured in so good a cause. The cross he bore was the cause of Christ; and his afflictions were but the filling up of the measure of Christ's afflictions[f]. Moreover they were so many

[e] 1 Cor. xv. 30, 31. [f] Col. i. 24.

many testimonies to him of his fidelity: and of God's acceptance of him in his work[g]. He was sure also that in due time they would all be richly recompensed, agreeably to that blessed promise, that "if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him," and "be glorified together with him" for evermore[h]. But besides these consolations of faith and hope, he had, as every faithful Minister shall have, special manifestations of God to his soul, sufficient to make him "exceeding joyful in all his tribulations." What but a sense of redeeming love carried him forward with such zeal and stedfastness in all his course? What but this enabled him, when his back was torn with scourges, and his feet were made fast in the stocks, to fill his prison, not with mournings and complaints, but with songs of praise and thanksgiving? And in like manner shall all who serve the Lord with fidelity be supported under their trials, and be favoured with consolations proportioned to their afflictions.]

To enter into his feelings aright, it will be proper to notice yet further—

III. The more particular grounds of his thanksgiving—

The design of God in these dispensations was in a more especial manner an occasion of gratitude to his soul. He felt that by this his diversified experience, he was better fitted for the discharge of his high office, and better qualified to comfort his afflicted Brethren, By it,

1. He was better qualified to comfort others—

[None but those who have been in deep waters are capable of entering into the feelings of a tempest-tossed soul. It was from his "having been in all points tempted like as we are, that Jesus himself was so tenderly touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and that he acquired, so to speak, "a power to succour his tempted people[i]." Thus Paul learned to participate with others both in their joys and sorrows. Were they assaulted either by men or devils, he knew both the extent of the trial, and the consolations proper to be suggested for the mitigation of it. He could delineate the workings of the afflicted mind: he could state its various discouragements, and the devices by which Satan laboured to aggravate its sorrows. He needed only to report his own experience, and to apply to others the remedies he had found effectual

[g] Luke xxi. 12, 13. [h] 2 Tim. ii. 12. Rom. viii. 17.
[i] Heb. ii. 18. & iv. 15.

effectual for his own soul. In a word, the lessons which he himself had learned in the school of adversity, he was enabled to teach others, and thus eventually to "comfort others with the same comfort wherewith he himself had been comforted of God."

Now this very consideration constituted no small part of that comfort for which he so gratefully adored his God. He saw that, whether he was afflicted or comforted, his experience was designed to promote, and did actually promote, "the consolation and salvation of others[k]:" and there he did rejoice, and determined, even though his trials should proceed to the utmost possible extremity, to rejoice, and to bless and magnify his God[l].

In this view will every faithful Minister rejoice, thankful alike either for joys or sorrows, if only they may fit him for a more profitable exercise of his Ministry, and ultimately advance that for which alone he deserves to live, the consolation and salvation of those committed to his charge.]

2. He was made to edify others by his example—

[The supports which Paul experienced under his accumulated trials, were a source of great encouragement to others. His imprisonment at Rome, which he was apprehensive might intimidate many, and impede the success of his Ministry, "turned out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel: for his bonds in Christ being manifest in all the imperial Palace, and in all other places, many of his Brethren, waxing confident by his bonds, were so much the more bold to speak the word without fear[m]." Thus, though he was bound, "the word of God was not bound;" on the contrary, "it had free course and was glorified:" and the tidings which he received respecting the stedfastness of his converts, far overbalanced all his pains and sorrows. Hear how he speaks of this in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians: "When Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, we were comforted over you, brethren, in all our affliction and distress by your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord[n]."

And who that loves his people will not gladly lead them in the van of the battle, if he may but encourage them to "fight the good fight of faith?" Surely no good soldier of Jesus Christ will regret the wounds he receives in this holy conflict, if others be animated by his example to "quit themselves like men" till they have gained the victory.]

ADDRESS—

1. Those

[k] ver. 6.
[l] Phil. ii. 17, 18.
[m] Phil. i. 12—14.
[n] 1 Thess. iii. 6—8.

1. Those who are afraid of suffering for Christ's sake—

[Let it not be thought that the cross of Christ is so heavy as it appears to be. Were we indeed left to bear it alone, or were there no consolations afforded by him to his suffering people, we might well be terrified at the idea of being called to sustain it. But the Lord himself will lighten it by his almighty power, and will succour us with such preter-natural strength, that, instead of sinking under the weight, we shall rejoice that we are counted worthy to bear it, and shall account our very sufferings an inestimable gift bestowed upon us for his sake[o]. And if *here* we are enabled so to "glory in the cross of Christ," what shall we do *hereafter?* Do any of those who once "came out of great tribulation," now regret any thing that they ever endured for Christ's sake? Are not their present joys an abundant recompense for all their sorrows[p]? ——— Fear not then to follow Christ, though you should have to take up the heaviest cross that can be laid upon you: for, if you will but bear it after him, you shall find that "his yoke is easy, and his burthen light."]

2. Those who have experienced the consolations of the Gospel—

[Make the improvement of them which the Apostle did; *Bless God for them;* and *improve them for the good of others.* Have you by your own experience found God to be "a Father of mercies, and a God of all comfort?" acknowledge him under this blessed character, and commend him to all for the instruction and comfort of their souls. Your consolations are not given you for yourselves merely, but for others also; that you may be channels of communication between God and them. Many there are who need your friendly offices; many with weak "hands, and feeble knees, and fearful hearts," whom, with God's blessing, you may support and comfort. O remember, that it is a god-like office to "comfort them that are cast down," "to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness!" And in thus improving your diversified experiences, you will enrich both yourselves and others: I may add too, you will have the best evidence, that they are wrought in you by the Spirit of God: for it is in this improvement of them that "pure and undefiled religion" very principally consists[q]. You may be assured also, that, in thus drawing out your *soul* to the hungry, and satisfying the afflicted *soul*, "your own souls shall become like a watered garden, and like springs of water, whose waters fail not[r]."]

[o] Phil. i. 29. [p] Rev. vii. 13—17. [q] Jam. i. 27.
[r] Isai. lviii. 10, 11. If this be addressed to *a Visiting Society*, this idea must be more fully insisted on.

DCCCCLXXVIII

THE TESTIMONY OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

2 Cor. i. 12. *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.*

GREATLY as the Apostle merited the admiration of all, there was not any thing which he did that was not made an occasion of complaint against him. His enemies at Corinth were numerous and powerful: and so grievous had been their influence in producing divisions and contentions amongst his converts, that he was constrained to menace them with a speedy visit, in case his remonstrances with them should not be duly regarded[a]. Had he proceeded thither immediately, they would have represented him as a man, who could not endure the least contradiction, but tyrannized over his followers in a most despotic manner: but when a few months elapsed without their seeing him, they spoke of him as a weak man, who did not know his own mind, or dared not execute his own purpose. But against these accusations he answered, that the delay of his journey had been not at all owing to any versatility of mind in him, but partly to outward impediments which he could not easily have removed, and partly to the unwillingness he had felt to exercise the severity which their misconduct called for[b]. Under all their misrepresentations, however, he had felt much peace of mind; because he had the testimony of his own conscience, that, in his Ministrations in general, and in his whole conduct towards them in particular, he had acted to God, without any corrupt bias whatsoever. This he asserts in our text; from whence we shall take occasion to shew,

I. Of what kind our conversation in the world should be—

That our *actions* should be consonant with all the strictest rules of morality, is a truth so obvious, that we

[a] 1 Cor. iv. 18—21. [b] ver. 8, 23.

we need not at present insist upon it. It is not so much of actions, as of *principles*, that we are now called to speak. The Christian should have respect to God in all that he does, and should approve himself to God,

1. In his ends and designs—

[There should be no leaning to self in any thing that we do; no view to the advancement of our own interest, or reputation, or influence, but a single desire to do only what we verily believe to be the will of God, and what shall most conduce to his glory. This principle is to be carried into every thing, the most minute, as well as the most important: "Whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God[c]." By this the Apostle had regulated his conduct towards the Corinthian Church. Whether he had exercised authority or forbearance, he had had this only in view: And we in like manner, whether we proceed in an uniform tenor, or diversify our conduct according to existing circumstances, should exclude every other consideration from our minds: "we should choose only the things that will please[d]" and glorify our God.]

2. In the means by which he prosecutes his ends—

[Here the utmost simplicity of mind should always prevail. We should not listen to the dictates of "fleshly wisdom," but with "godly sincerity" proceed in a plain straitforward faith. Not that we are to discard human wisdom: for we are told to "walk in wisdom towards them that are without." But, though we are to be "wise concerning that which is good, we are to be simple concerning evil[e]," and are to combine the "wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove[f]." In no respect are we ever "to do evil that good may come." Here, however, many fail. On two different occasions do we find even Abraham himself grievously erring in this particular, and reproved for it by a heathen prince[g]. And Isaac also was faulty in the very same thing, denying his wife, lest for her sake he should be put to death[h]. It was to the same weakness that we must ascribe the conduct of Peter, when, through fear of the Judaizing teachers, he constrained the Gentiles to conform to the Jewish rites. He thought he should in that way remove a stumbling-block from the Jews: and so far he was right, in wishing to remove a stumbling-block out of their way; but he was wrong in the means he adopted for that end: he knew that the Gentiles were not bound by the Jewish law; and therefore he had no right to impose this yoke

[c] 1 Cor. x. 31.
[d] Isai. lvi. 4.
[e] Rom. xvi. 19.
[f] Matt. x. 16.
[g] Gen. xii. 13, 18, 19. & xx. 2, 5, 9, 10.
[h] Gen. xxvi. 7—10.

yoke upon them: and he was justly blamed by Paul as "not walking uprightly" in this particular[1]. Whatever be our end, we must do nothing to accomplish it which will not bear the light, and stand the test of the severest scrutiny. We must act simply under the influence of "the grace of God," and never in a way of carnal policy. Our ends, and our means, must be alike regulated by the word of God, and alike conducive to the glory of his name.

Such then is to be our conversation in the world; it must not only be moral, but religious, having respect in all things to God's word as the rule, and his honour as the end; whilst all selfish ends and human policy must be utterly discarded.]

But as internal principles are difficult to be discerned, we proceed to shew,

II. What evidence we should have, that it is such as God requires—

Men can judge only of acts, and can ascertain principles no farther than they are illustrated by the outward fruits produced by them. The inward motives and dispositions of the mind can be discerned only by ourselves, and by God, who searcheth the heart. Nor can they be discovered even by ourselves without great care and watchfulness. We are very apt to mistake our own motives and principles, just as the Disciples did, when they would have called fire from heaven to consume a Samaritan village: "they knew not what spirit they were of." But we ought not to be so deceived respecting our conversation;

We ought to have "the testimony of our conscience" respecting it—

[We should have a consciousness, that we do indeed desire to do the will of God, and that we would not willingly either go beyond it, or fall short of it, in any thing. We should be able to make the same appeal to our God and Saviour as Peter did, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," and that I am seeking nothing but the glory of thy name: "thou knowest that, in order to find out thy will, I study thy blessed word, and seek instruction from thy good Spirit, and commit my ways to thy guidance: thou knowest that, though I often have doubts and misgivings whether I do really adopt the most perfect line of conduct, I do

[1] Gal. ii. 11—14.

do not intentionally deviate from any thing which I believe to be pleasing and acceptable to thee. I can appeal to thee, that I do continually exercise myself to keep a conscience void of offence both towards God and man."]

Such a testimony may be enjoyed by every one of us—

[It is not the result of pride, as some would imagine; but the voice of God's blessed "Spirit bearing witness with our spirits." When Job was accused of harbouring some hidden iniquity, which had brought down such signal judgments upon him, he made his appeal to God in these energetic terms, "Thou knowest that I am not wicked[k]." The apostle Paul frequently appealed in like manner to the heart-searching God. In the very chapter before us he says, "I call God for a record upon my soul, that, to spare you, I came not as yet unto Corinth[l]." But in the Epistle to the Romans we have a more remarkable instance. It was supposed by the Jews, that the Apostle's love to the Gentiles necessarily argued a want of love towards his Brethren of the Jewish nation: and he, in order to silence for ever such an accusation, says, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart for my Brethren[m]." What forbids then that we should have the same testimony respecting our principles, and that we should be able to make the same appeal to Almighty God? If we have really walked as before him, we "have the same witness of it in ourselves[n]," and may say with Job, "He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps: his way have I kept, and not declined[o]."]

Blessed is that man who has such an evidence within him! but no words can adequately describe,

III. The comfort which such a testimony will produce—

It was a matter of no small comfort to the Apostle that he had this testimony. And to every one who possesses it, it is a solid ground of joy and triumph[p]. It is of unspeakable comfort,

1. Under the reproaches and calumnies of men—

[The servants of God will always be hated and calumniated by an ungodly world: and, generally speaking, the more

[k] Job. x. 7. [l] ver. 23. [m] Rom. ix. 1, 2.
[n] 1 John v. 10. [o] Job xxiii. 10, 11. [p] καύχησις.

more zealous they are in the discharge of their duty, the more virulent will be the opposition made to them. We have seen already the construction which the Apostle's enemies at Corinth put on the delay of his journey thither: and in other parts of this Epistle we are told, that he was represented by them as "walking after the flesh[q]," and as "craftily endeavouring to catch men with guile[r]." And it is highly probable that those who did not understand the principles on which he acted, would speak of him as the most changeable and inconsistent of men; sometimes observing days and ceremonies, and at other times violently opposing the observance of them. But he cared little for their censures, when he had the testimony of his own conscience that he was acting right. Thus it is that pious characters are judged at this day. People are glad to find fault with them. Every thing they do is made an occasion of reproach to them. Whether they more affect the austerity of John, or the ease and familiarity of Jesus, whether they pipe or mourn, they are equally condemned[s]. As for the reasons of their conduct, or the truth of the reports that are circulated respecting them, no one will take the trouble to make the least inquiry. Sometimes it happens, as in the case of Joseph, that appearances are against them, and that they have no means of clearing their own character: Oh! what a satisfaction is it to them under such circumstances, that God knoweth their hearts, and will vindicate them in the last day from the aspersions that are cast upon them! Doubtless that pure and conscientious man had much sweeter composure of mind in prison, even whilst "the iron of the stocks entered into his soul," than had the adulterous queen, at whose instance these pains were inflicted on him. And every man who enjoys the testimony of his own conscience, is out of the reach of those shafts by which ungodly men endeavour to wound his reputation, and destroy his peace.]

2. In the prospect of death and judgment—

[No man who knows his own sinfulness will presume to justify himself before God: but, in relation to particular accusations, or to the general desire of his soul to please God, every man who is truly upright may enjoy the richest consolation in the prospect of that day when the truth shall be brought to light, and every man who has served God in sincerity and truth shall have a sentence of approbation from the lips of his Judge. It was in the view of this day, that Paul made so light of the obloquy that was cast upon him[t]. And in the near approach of death, Hezekiah found in the records of his own conscience a most consolatory reflection. For his country,

[q] 2 Cor. x. 2, 3.
[r] 2 Cor. xii. 15.
[s] Matt. xi. 17—19.
[t] 1 Cor. iv. 3—5.

country, and for the cause of God in the land, "he wept sore:" but for his own departure he had no reason to mourn[u]: he had approved himself faithful in the discharge of his duty; and he had no ground to dread the judgment that would be pronounced upon him. But would the same confidence become us? Yes, in proportion as the same grounds exist for it: for "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things: but, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, and may assure our hearts before him[x]."]

ADVICE—

1. Seek to have your conscience duly enlightened—

[If conscience itself be not enlightened by the Word and Spirit of God, its testimony will be extremely fallacious: it may give a sentence of approbation where the severest condemnation is due[y]. If not itself regulated according to the Scriptures of truth, it will be a false guide and a deceitful comforter———]

2. Consult it daily as in the presence of God—

[Inquire into its records of the past, and seek its direction for the future. Consult it in reference to every part of your duty, and especially in reference to the end for which you live, and the means you are using to attain it. If you will listen to its voice, it will tell you whether you are living to yourselves, or to your God; and whether you are exercising that care and watchfulness, that labour and self-denial, that zeal and love, which are necessary to bear out a testimony in your favour———The more diligently you consult it in your hours of leisure and retirement, especially if you take care to implore earnestly from God the influences of his Spirit, the more salutary will be its warnings, and the more consoling its testimonies in your favour.]

3. Endeavour to keep it pure—

[Excellent was that resolution of Job, "my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live[z]." True it is, that whilst you are in this ensnaring world, exposed as you are to temptations without and to corruptions within, there will be frequent occasion to lament the defilements you contract. But go from day to day, and from hour to hour, to the fountain of Christ's blood, which is "able to cleanse you from all sin," and "from an evil conscience." And let not any sin, however small it may in appearance be, continue unrepented of, or unmortified———]

4. Aim

[u] Isai. xxxviii. 3.
[x] 1 John iii. 19—21.
[y] Acts xxvi. 9.
[z] Job. xxvii. 6.

4. Aim at the highest attainments—

[It is not at a course of moral actions only that you must aim, but at a life entirely and unreservedly devoted to God. "The single eye" is that after which you must aspire; and "the simplicity that is in Christ," is that which you must hold fast under all possible situations. Every action, every word, every thought, must, if possible, be under the influence of Divine grace, and be "brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Strive for this with all your might; and then we will venture to say, that in you shall that word be fulfilled; "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace[z]."]

[z] Ps. xxxvii. 37.

DCCCCLXXIX.

THE CHURCHMAN'S CONFESSION, OR AN APPEAL TO THE LITURGY.

2 Cor. i. 13. *We write none other things unto you than what you read or acknowledge.*

AS the testimony of one's own conscience is the strongest support under false accusations, so an appeal to the consciences of others is the most effectual means of refuting the charges that are brought against us. To this species of argument God himself condescended to have recourse, in order to convince his people, that the evils which they imputed to him originated wholly in their own folly and wickedness: "O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? and wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes[a]?"..... "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are Lords, we will come no more unto thee[b]?" "Ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Isreal, Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal[c]?" The inspired writers also not unfrequently vindicate themselves in a similar manner. St. Paul, for instance,

[a] Isaiah v. 3, 4. [b] Jer. ii. 5, 31. [c] Ezek. xviii. 25.

instance, had been represented by some at Corinth as fickle and inconstant, because he had not come to them at the time they had expected him. To clear himself from this imputation, he informs them, that he had met with insuperable obstacles in Asia, which had prevented him from prosecuting his intended journey; and that in the whole of his conduct towards them he had been actuated, not by temporizing motives and carnal policy, but by the most strict unblemished integrity. He declares, that he had "the testimony of his own conscience" respecting this[a]; and that he had a further testimony in their consciences also, respecting the truth of what he said; that, in asserting these things, "he wrote no other things than what they read in his former Epistle, and were constrained to acknowledge; and he trusted they should acknowledge even to the end."

The faithful Minister of Christ derives great advantage from being able to appeal to records, the authority of which is acknowledged by his hearers. By referring them to the holy Scriptures in proof of all that he advances, he establishes his word upon the most unquestionable authority, and fixes conviction upon their minds. The Ministers of the Church of England have yet further advantage, because, in addition to the Scriptures, they have other authorities to which they may refer in confirmation of the truths they utter. It is true, we are not to put any human compositions on a level with the Inspired Volume: the Scriptures alone are the proper standard of truth; but the Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy of the Church of England are an authorized exposition of the sense in which all her Members profess to understand the Scriptures. To these therefore we appeal as well as to the Sacred Records. But because it would occupy more time than can reasonably be allowed for one discourse to appeal to all at once, we shall content ourselves with calling your attention to the Liturgy, and especially to that part of it which we call the General

[a] 2 Cor. i. 12.

General Confession. We will briefly state what doctrines we insist upon as necessary to be received; and under each we will compare our statements with what we "read" in the Scriptures, and "acknowledge" in our prayers: And we trust that, after having done this, we shall be able to adopt the language of the text, and say, "We write none other things unto you than what ye read, and acknowledge."

There are three things, which, as it is our duty, so also it is our continual labour, to make known; namely, *Our lost estate—The means of our recovery* —and *The path of duty*.

Permit me then to state what we declare respecting the first of these points, *Our lost estate*.

We declare, that every man is a sinner before God: that both the actions and the hearts of men are depraved: that whatever difference there may be between one and another with respect to open sin, there is no difference with respect to our alienation from God, or our radical aversion to his holy will. We affirm, that, on account of our defection from God, we deserve his heavy displeasure: that the most moral and sober, as well as the base and profligate, are under condemnation on account of sin; and that all of us without exception must perish, if we do not turn to God in the way that he has prescribed.

We think, yea we are sure, that we have abundant proof of these things in the holy Scriptures. The *universality* of our departure from God, and of our danger in consequence of it, is declared in the strongest terms by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. "There is none righteous," says he, "no not one: there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God: they are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one." To this he adds, "that every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God[c]." We could wish you particularly to notice what an *accumulation*

[c] Rom. iii. 10—19.

tion of words there is in this short passage to prove the universality of our guilt and misery. Of righteous persons, there is "none," "none," "none," "no not one," "no not one:" "all" are guilty; all "together," even "every" person, and "all the world." Will any one, after reading this passage, presume to think himself an exception?

Nor is the *depth* of our depravity less clear than its universality. "The heart," says Jeremiah, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it[f]?" This is spoken, not of some particular person or age or country, but of mankind at large, even of our whole race. Solomon affirms the same, when he says, "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead[g]." And to the same effect is that declaration of St. Paul, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be[h]." To these general affirmations of Scripture, we may add the confessions of the most eminent Saints. Job, who was the most perfect man on earth in his day, no sooner attained the knowledge of his real character, than he exclaimed, "Behold, I am vile[i]." St. Paul also, speaking of himself and of all the other Apostles, says, "We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others[k]."

In labouring to establish these awful truths, we are often considered as libelling human nature, and as representing men in such an humiliating and distressed state as to fill them with melancholy, or drive them to despair. Let us then, in vindication both of ourselves and of our doctrines, compare these assertions with our public acknowledgements. We begin our Confession with saying, "*We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep.*" This is a peculiar expression that must not be overlooked. We

[f] Jer. xvii. 9 [g] Eccl. ix. 3. [h] Rom. viii. 7.
[i] Job. xl. 4. [k] Eph. ii. 3. and Tit. iii. 3.

We apprehend it does not mean merely that we have departed from God, but also that we have never sought to return to him: for other animals will find their way back when they have wandered from their home; but it is rarely, if ever, known that the sheep traces back its footsteps to the fold from whence it has strayed: if it return at all, it is not by any foresight of its own. How just a picture does this exhibit of our fallen race! That we have departed from God is too plain to be denied: but in how few do we behold any solicitude to return to him! How few are there who search the Scriptures daily, in order to find their way back! How few who implore help and direction from their God with an earnestness at all proportioned to the urgency of their case!

Is it inquired, wherein we have so greatly erred? Our own acknowledgements contain the most satisfactory reply: "*We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.*" How true is this! Look at all mankind; see them from infancy to youth, and from youth to old age; What are they all following? are they obeying unreservedly the commands of God? are they, in compliance with his will, mortifying every evil propensity, and doing the things which are pleasing in his sight? Alas! nothing is further from their minds than this. Their pursuits indeed vary according to their age, their circumstances, their habits; but whatever they be, they are no other than the devices and desires of their own hearts: if in any thing they appear to do the will of God, they do not act from a principle of love to him, but from a desire to conform to the customs of their country, and to lay a foundation for self-applause. The whole tenor of our lives is but too justly marked in those following acknowledgements, "*We have offended against thy holy laws; we have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and have done those things which we ought not to have done.*" Permit me to ask, Which of the laws of God have we not violated times without number? Shall we say, We have not committed murder or adultery? How

How vain the boast, if we interpret the commandments in their full latitude, and call to mind the declarations of our Lord, that an angry word is murder, and a wanton look adultery[l]! To go into all our sins of omission, and commission, were an endless task. Suffice it to say, that in ten thousand instances "we have sinned, in thought, word, and deed, against the Divine Majesty;" and have habitually neglected the interests of our souls.

Perhaps it may be said, "Our actions indeed have been evil, but our hearts are good." But how does this accord with that which in our Confession forms the summit of the climax, "*There is no health in us?*" Here our Church has taught us to trace all the evils of our life to the fountain-head, a corrupt and wicked heart. In this expression she evidently refers, either to that confession of the Apostle, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing[m];" or rather to that most humiliating declaration of the Prophet, "From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores[n]." The import of the words is plain: we confess before our God, that we are altogether depraved; that we are disordered in every member of our body, and in every faculty of our soul; that our understanding is darkened, our will perverse, our affections sensual, our memory treacherous, our conscience seared, and all our "members, instruments of unrighteousness and sin."

Thus far then we are fully vindicated, vindicated too, we trust, in your consciences, in all that we have affirmed respecting the lost estate of man. We do indeed represent the whole human race as in a most deplorable condition: but no Member of our Establishment can controvert our positions, without denying the plainest asseverations of Holy Writ, and contradicting his own most solemn acknowledgements.

Let us now turn our attention to the second point which we proposed to notice, namely, *The means of* our *recovery* from this state.

We

[l] Matt. v. 27, 28. [m] Rom. vii. 18. [n] Isaiah i. 5, 6.

We affirm that, in order to obtain salvation, two things are necessary; "Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ[o]." By repentance, we do not mean that superficial work which consists in saying, 'I am sorry for what I have done;' but in such a deep sense of our guilt and danger, as leads us with all humility of mind to God, and stirs us up to a most earnest application to him for mercy. We must feel sin to be a burthen to our souls: we must be made to tremble at the wrath of God which we have merited: we must cry to him for deliverance from it, as Peter cried for preservation from the waves, "Save, Lord, or I perish:" and this must be our experience, not merely after some flagrant transgression, or on some particular occasion, but at all times: it must be, as it were, the daily habit of our minds.

Is it needful to confirm this from the holy Scriptures? Surely we need not be reminded of what our Lord has repeatedly affirmed; "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish[p]." We need not be told that it is "the weary and heavy laden" whom Christ invites[q]: that it is "the broken and contrite heart which God will not despise[r]:" that we must "lothe ourselves for all our abominations[s];" that we must "sow in tears, and go on our way weeping[t]:" that we must cry with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me[u]? and with Job, "I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes[x]."

Yet, when this is insisted on, and pressed upon the conscience as of universal, absolute, and indispensable necessity, we are told, that we carry matters to excess: that, however such bitter contrition may suit the profligate and abandoned, it is unnecessary in the case of the more moral and decent: *they* have never done any thing that requires such deep humiliation; *they* have no such cause to fear and tremble; *they* have indeed sinned, but are in no danger of perishing; nor have *they* ever merited the wrath of God.

But

[o] Acts xx. 21. [p] Luke xiii. 3. 5. [q] Matt. xi. 28.
[r] Ps. li. 17. [s] Ezek. xxxvi. 31. [t] Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6.
[u] Rom. vii. 24. [x] Job. xlii. 6.

But is it not astonishing that any Member of the Established Church should be so ignorant as to make these vain assertions? What are the terms in which we address the Divine Majesty every time that we attend his worship? "*Do thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders: Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults: Restore thou them that are penitent.*" Have we then been dissembling with God all our days; calling ourselves "miserable offenders," when we feel no misery at all; and when, instead of bewailing our offences, we think ourselves almost, if not altogether, as good as we need to be? In this prayer we do not presume even to expect mercy, except as persons deeply penitent and contrite. And let it be remembered, that these petitions are put into the mouths of all the congregation; there is not one form for one class of persons, and another for another; but all profess to approach God as the repenting publican, "Smiting upon their breasts, and crying, God be merciful to me a sinner[y]!" We mean not to say, that no person can hope for mercy, who does not feel such or such a measure of contrition, (for all who pray in *sincerity* may hope for acceptance, though their hearts be not so contrite as they could wish,) but to shew, that all Members of the Church of England acknowledge that penitence is highly suited to their state.

But, besides their repentance, we observed, that faith also was necessary, even faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This we invariably and inflexibly affirm. As it is not our good works and meritorious life that will save us, so neither will our repentance save us. If we could shed rivers of tears, they never would avail to cleanse us from one single sin. It is the blood of Christ, and that alone, that can atone for our guilt: *That* is "the fountain that was opened for sin and for uncleanness[z]:" and as long as the world shall stand, we must require of sinners to wash in it, in order that they may be clean. And, forasmuch as men are with great difficulty turned from endeavouring "to establish their own righteousness[a]," or

[y] Luke xviii. 13. [z] Zech. xiii. 1. [a] Rom. x. 3.

or to unite their own fancied merits with the merits of Christ, we guard them strongly against this fatal error; we declare to them, that, if they do this, they will invalidate the whole Gospel; and that, if ever they be saved at all, it must be by a humble, simple reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ. That there are blessings promised to the penitent, and to the obedient, we very willingly allow; and on proper occasions we are glad to bring forward those promises, in order to encourage men to repent and obey: But that men are justified by their repentance or obedience, or in any other way than by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we utterly deny. And we declare that, if men seek to be justified in any other way, "Christ shall profit them nothing[b]."

And do we, in affirming these things, deviate at all from what we read in the holy Scriptures? Does not our blessed Lord expressly say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me[c]?" He tells us plainly, that "he who believeth on him, hath everlasting life; and that he who believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him[d];" and again, "He that believeth, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned[e]." To the same effect also is the testimony of his Apostles: We find them invariably directing penitents to believe in him as the only, and effectual, means of obtaining acceptance with God. When the jailor came in to Paul and Silas trembling, and crying, "Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?" the answer given him was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved[f]." Instead of varying their directions according to the different characters they addressed, they affirm, in the strongest manner, that "there is no other foundation whereon any man can build[g];" 'nor any other name whereby any man can be saved[h]." And when they saw in any a disposition to unite the observance of some ceremonial or moral duties as a joint

[b] Gal. v. 2. [c] John xiv. 6. [d] John iii. 36.
[e] Mark xvi. 16. [f] Acts xvi. 30, 31. [g] 1 Cor. iii. 11.
[h] Acts iv. 12.

joint ground of their hope, they warned them plainly, that their salvation must be "wholly of grace or wholly of works[i];" and that, if they relied in any measure upon their works, "they were fallen from grace," they were "become debtors to do the whole law," and that "Christ was become of no effect unto them[k];" with respect to them "he was dead in vain[l]."

Offensive as these statements are, and reprobated as being of a licentious tendency, wherein do they differ from our own acknowledgements? We pray that God would "restore to his favour them that are penitent;" but how, and in what manner, do we expect that restoration to be accomplished? Is it uncovenanted mercy that we ask? Or is it according to our own good works that we desire to find acceptance? No; we profess that our reliance is altogether on God's promises as they are revealed in the Gospel; "*Restore us, according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord.*" Among the promises to which we may be supposed to refer, the following must certainly be numbered: "Look unto me, and be ye saved[m]." "Come unto me, and I will give you rest[n]." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out[o]." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin[p]." "All that believe, *shall be* justified from all things[q]." "Though your sins be as crimson, they shall be white as snow[r]." But whatever the promises be, whether their reference to Christ be more or less plain, we are assured that it is in him, and in him alone, that the promises are confirmed to us; for the Apostle says, "All the promises of God IN HIM are yea, and IN HIM amen[s]." It is in Christ alone that God can "be just, and at the same time the justifier of sinners[t]:" and therefore when we plead that promise, that "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness[u]," we can expect

[i] Rom. xi. 6. [k] Gal. v. 3, 4. [l] Gal. ii. 21.
[m] Isai. xlv. 22. [n] Matt. xi. 28. [o] John vi. 37.
[p] 1 John i. 7. [q] Acts xiii. 39. [r] Isai. i. 18.
[s] 2 Cor. i. 20. [t] Rom. iii. 26. [u] 1 John i. 9.

expect its accomplishment in no other way than through faith in Christ.

Thus under this head also may be seen a perfect harmony between those things which we have affirmed, and those which you "read" in the Scriptures, and "acknowledge" in your prayers.

Nor do we doubt a similar issue to our inquiries, while, under the last head of our discourse, we state to you *The path of duty.*

We inculcate the practice of every personal and relative duty. But we are not satisfied with that standard of holiness which is current in the world: we require a higher tone of morals: in addition to sobriety and honesty, we insist upon a life entirely devoted to God: we affirm, that it is every man's duty to "delight himself in God[x];" to have such a lively sense of Christ's love to him, as shall constrain him to an unreserved surrender of all his faculties and powers to the service of his Lord[y]. We must live for God: we must be like a faithful servant, who inquires from day to day what his master's will is; and inquires, in order that he may do it. As a servant who had neglected all his duties through the day, would feel ashamed and afraid of his master's displeasure, so should we feel ashamed and afraid, if any day pass without having executed to the utmost of our power the duties of it. We should walk as on the confines of the eternal world, and act as persons who must shortly give account of every talent that has been committed to them. To be "dead unto the world[z]," and "alive unto God[a];" to attain more and more of the Divine image[b]; to grow up into Christ in all things[c]; to enjoy fellowship with God[d], and anticipate the enjoyments of heaven[e]; this is our duty, and should be our daily study and delight.

In requiring so much, we are supposed to require what is altogether impracticable, or, at least, what, if practised, would unfit us for all the common offices of life.

[x] Job xxvii. 10. & Ps. xxxvii. 4.
[y] 2 Cor. v. 14.
[z] Gal. vi. 14.
[a] Rom. vi. 11.
[b] 2 Cor. iii 18.
[c] Eph. iv. 15.
[d] 1 John i. 3.
[e] Eph. i. 13, 14.

life. But what do we read in the holy Scriptures? Do they require of us less than this? Do they not teach us to "yield ourselves living sacrifices to God as our most reasonable service[f]?" Do they not enjoin us to "live henceforth not unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us and rose again[g]?" Do they not require that "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God[h]?" And is not the Holy Spirit (through whose Divine agency alone we can do any thing that is good) promised to us for this very end, to renew us after the Divine image in righteousness and true holiness?

And wherein do our own acknowledgements differ from this? Let us attend to the supplications which we offer before God:—"*Grant, O most merciful Father, for Christ's sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name.*" Here, so far from putting godliness out of our thoughts, we profess to desire it in the first place; and justly do we ask that first, because, without that, all our acts of righteousness and sobriety would be no better than splendid sins; they would want the motives and principles which alone distinguish them from heathen virtues. Mark too the measure and degree in which we desire these virtues: we are not satisfied with that which shall gain us a name among men; we ask, (and let it ever be remembered that without the influences of God's Spirit all our own efforts will be in vain,) that we may be enabled to attain such a degree of piety, as that God may be glorified in us, and that the transcendent excellence of Christianity may be visibly exhibited in our lives.

We appeal then to all; What do we, or what can we ask, of you more than this? And if these high attainments be not necessary, why do you ask of God for Christ's sake to give them to you? If, on the other hand, they are necessary, why are we deemed enthusiastic and over-righteous for requiring them at your hands? If in your prayers you mean what you say, you justify us; and, if you do not mean what you say, you

[f] Rom. xii. 1. [g] 2 Cor. v. 15. [h] 1 Cor. x. 31.

you condemn yourselves; you confess yourselves to be hypocrites and dissemblers with God.

We have now finished our consideration of that truly scriptural prayer: and we will conclude with commending it to you as *a test* in a two-fold view.

First; Take it as *a test whereby to try the discourses which you hear*. As Members of the Church of England, we have a right to expect that the discourses of Ministers shall correspond with the Liturgy of our Church. Certainly, in the first instance, the holy Scriptures are to be our guide: but, as all profess to have the Scriptures on their side, let us bring to our aid that excellent compendium of religion which we have been considering.

Are there any who descant upon the dignity of our nature, the goodness of our hearts, and the rectitude of our lives? What appearance do such sentiments make when brought to the touchstone of this prayer? Are they not as opposite as darkness is to light? and should we not regard such statements as the effusions of pride and ignorance? should we not tremble for those who hear them, lest, being "blind followers of the blind, they all together should fall into the ditch[1]?"

Are there others who tell us that we are to be saved by our works, and who would thereby lull us asleep in impenitence, and divert our attention from the Saviour of the world? Let us not be deluded by the syren song. Let us turn to our own confessions, to refute such anti-christian doctrines: Let us learn from them the necessity of humiliation and contrition, and of "fleeing to Christ, as to the refuge that is set before us." As for the idea, that the founding of our hopes upon Christ, and upon the promises made to us in him, will lead to a neglect of good works, let us see what the Compilers of our Liturgy thought of that, and what they have put in the mouths of all believing penitents. Do not the very same persons who seek for mercy through Christ, intreat of God that they may be enabled to "live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of his holy name?" And is it not notorious,

[1] Matt. xv. 14.

rious, that the very persons who maintain most stedfastly the doctrines of faith, are uniformly condemned for the excessive and unnecessary strictness of their lives?

In the same manner, if there be any who plead for a conformity to the world, and decry all vital godliness as enthusiasm, we may see what judgment is to be formed of them also. They may call themselves Christians; but they have nothing of Christianity, except the name.

Lastly; If there be any who separate the different parts of religion, inculcating some to the neglect of others; magnifying works to the exclusion of faith, or establishing faith to the destruction of good works; or confounding faith and works, instead of distinguishing them as the fruit from the root; if such, I say, there be, let their statements be contrasted with the order, the fulness, and the harmony of this prayer; and the erroneousness of them will instantly appear. We do not wish to produce critical hearers; but it is the duty of every man to "prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good[k];" and as we have the advantage of an authorized standard of divine truth, we invite all to search that, as well as the holy Scriptures: and we do not hesitate to say of this prayer in particular, what the Prophet speaks of the Inspired Volume, "To the law, and to the testimony; if Ministers speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them[l]."

Next, let us take this prayer as *a test whereby to try our own experience.* We may now discard from our minds all that this or that Minister may lay down as necessary to our salvation. We have here, what no man can reasonably dispute, our own acknowledgements. We have here as beautiful, as just, as scriptural a summary of experimental religion, as ever was penned from the foundation of the world. The man, that from his inmost soul can utter this prayer, is a real Christian. Whatever be his views with respect to some particular doctrines,

[k] 1 Thess. v. 21. [l] Isai. viii. 20.

doctrines, (those I mean which are distinguished by the name of Calvinism,) his heart is right with God. Whether he admit or reject those abstruser points, he is accepted of God; and if he were to die this moment, he would be in heaven the next: the termination of his warfare would be to him the commencement of everlasting felicity. But is this the experience of us all? Would to God it were! All will repeat the words: but it is one thing to repeat, and another to feel, them. Let us then bring ourselves to this test; and never imagine that we are in a Christian state, till we can appeal to God, that this prayer is the very language of our hearts. In examining ourselves respecting it, let us inquire, Whether from our inmost souls we lament the numberless transgressions of our lives, and the unsearchable depravity of our hearts? When we cry to God for mercy as miserable offenders, do we abhor ourselves for our guilt, and tremble for our danger? Do we indeed feel that we deserve the wrath of Almighty God? Do we feel this, not only on some particular occasions, but, as it were, daily and hourly? Is the consciousness of it wrought into us, and become the habit of our minds, so that we can find no peace but in crying unto God, and pleading with him the merits of his dear Son? Is Christ, in this view, "precious" to our souls[m]? Is HE "our wisdom, HE our righteousness, HE our sanctification, HE our complete redemption[n]?" Having nothing in ourselves, do we make HIM our "all in all[o]?" Are we at the same time "renewed in the spirit of our minds?" Do we hate sin, not merely as it is destructive, but as it is defiling, to the soul? Do we account "the service of God to be perfect freedom;" and instead of wishing his law reduced to the standard of our practice, do we desire to have our practice raised to the standard of his law? Is it our labour to "shine as lights in a dark world," and "to shew forth in our own conduct the *virtues* of him that has

[m] 1 Pet. ii. 7. [n] 1 Cor. i. 30. [o] Col. iii. 11.

has called us[p]?" Let us all put these questions to ourselves; and they will soon shew us what we are. If this be not the state of our souls, we are in an awful condition indeed. Our very best services have been nothing but a solemn mockery: in our prayers, we have insulted, rather than worshipped, the Majesty of Heaven; we have come before our God "with a lie in our right hand[q];" O that it might please God to discover to us the heineousness of our guilt; and that we might all be "pricked to the heart," ere it be too late! Let us, the very next time we attempt to use this prayer, take notice of the frame of our minds: let us mark the awful incongruity between our professions and our actual experience: and let a sense of our hypocrisy lead us to repentance. Thus, shall the returning seasons of worship be attended with a double advantage to our souls: in praying for what we ought to seek, we shall be stirred up to seek it in good earnest: and, through the tender mercy of our God, we shall attain the experience of those things, which too many of us, it is to be feared, have hitherto hypocritically asked, and ignorantly condemned.

[p] 1 Pet. ii. 9. ἀρετὰς. [q] Isa. xliv. 20.

DCCCCLXXX.

THE DIFFERENT OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

2 Cor. i. 21, 22. *Now he who stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.*

IT is the inseparable property of Divine grace to make us jealous for the honour of God, and studious to promote it to the utmost of our power.

St. Paul, when accused of instability, vindicated his own character, because it was connected with his usefulness in the Ministry; but instantly ascribed to God the glory of whatever stedfastness he had been enabled to maintain.

His words naturally point out to our consideration,

I. The

I. The blessings which all true Christians enjoy—

Though all Christians do not attain the same measure either of holiness or of comfort, yet there are blessings common to all who are born of God.

1. They are established in Christ—

[All who believe in Christ are united to him as "branches of the true vine"—

At first indeed they are but as babes, or children, liable to be tossed to and fro[a]—

But by experience they become more rooted and grounded in Christ[b]—

As their views of their own weakness and of his sufficiency are enlarged, they grow more and more—

Nor was this peculiar to the Apostle, but the common privilege of all the Church at Corinth—

Indeed, it is the great end for which all other blessings are communicated—

And, in attaining it, the Believer becomes immoveable as Mount Sion[c]—]

2. They are anointed with an heavenly unction—

[It is the communication of the Holy Spirit that first enables them to believe in Christ[d]—

But, as the lamps in the Sanctuary, they have daily supplies of the holy oil—

By means of these they obtain more abundant knowledge and grace[e]—

And are progressively renewed after the image of their God[f]—

Not that all, even of true Christians, are alike favoured—

But every one receives according to the measure of the gift of Christ[g]—]

3. They are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise—

[A seal is for the purpose of both marking and securing property—

And with both these views the Holy Spirit seals the people of God—

He stamps the very image of God himself upon their souls[h]—

He thus marks them as his peculiar, his "purchased possession"—

He

[a] Eph. iv. 14. [b] Col. ii. 7. [c] Ps. cxxv. 1.
[d] 1 John ii. 20. [e] Isai. ii. 2, 3. [f] 2 Cor. iv. 16.
[g] Eph. iv. 7. [h] Eph. iv. 23, 24.

He secures them also to the day of complete redemption[i]—]

4. They have the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts—

[An earnest is both *a part* of a payment, and *a pledge* of the remainder—

And such is the Spirit to us, not in one only, but in all his operations—

In illuminating, quickening, sanctifying, or comforting the soul, He is an Earnest of that light and life, that purity and joy, which will be more richly communicated to us in the future world—

As a Seal, the Spirit assures us of our right to heaven; as an Earnest, he gives us a foretaste of it—]

The consideration of such inestimable blessings may well lead us to inquire after,

II. The source from whence they flow—

It appears needless, at first sight, to enter minutely into this part of our subject: but the very construction of the sentence shews that there is something peculiarly emphatical in it—It implies,

1. That these blessings are purely the gift of God—

[They are not the creatures of a vain and heated imagination—

Nor are they the offspring of man's will and power[k]—

Nor, though imparted in the use of means, do they *necessarily* flow from the means themselves—

They are purely and entirely the gift of God[l]—

And are bestowed by Him according to his sovereign will and pleasure[m]—]

2. That they evidently bear the Divine stamp and character upon them—

[The visible creation manifestly approves itself to be of Divine workmanship[n]—

And in the same manner do these blessings evidently appear to proceed from God—

The very effects which they produce upon the soul, discover this—

But the conviction, which they, who possess these blessings, feel of their Divine original, is inexpressibly clear and strong[o]—

Without

[i] Eph. i. 14. & iv. 30. [k] John i. 13. [l] Jam. i. 17.
[m] 1 Cor. xii. 6, 11. [n] Ps. xix. 1. [o] Isai. xli. 20.

Without the smallest hesitation they ascribe them to God as their only source[p]—]

3. That God is glorified by means of them—

[It is the Apostle's express design to glorify God on account of them—

And surely we cannot fail of admiring his power and goodness in them—

Or experience them, without an increased desire to devote ourselves to him—

And most of all shall we adore him for these *beginnings* of his grace, when we shall have received their full *completion*—]

INFER,

1. How little is true Religion known and experienced in the world!

[Christianity is in general viewed as a system of restraints, rather than as a source of enjoyments—

But none can have a just view of it who do not experience a measure of these blessings—

Let not any one then rest in false notions, or uninteresting professions—

Let all seek rather such a Religion as will make them holy and happy—

And pray, with the Apostle, that God would fulfil in them all his good pleasure[q]—]

2. How much do many true Christians live below their privileges!

[Many, instead of enjoying an heaven upon earth, are filled with doubts and fears—

Yet even these have the image of God manifestly instamped upon them—

And the hope which they possess is more precious to them than the whole world—

But we may well say to them, "Why art thou lean, seeing thou art a king's son?"—

Let them be ashamed of giving such occasion to the enemies of religion to triumph—

And let them seek that full liberty which God will vouchsafe to all his children—]

3. How astonishing are our obligations to each person in the Sacred Trinity!

[The Father is the great Source and Fountain of all our blessings—

Christ

[p] 2 Cor. v. 5. [q] 2 Thess. i. 11.

Christ is the Procurer of them, and the Medium through whom they come—

And the Holy Spirit is the Agent, by whom they are conveyed to us—

Let us hold fellowship with each in his distinct office and character[r]—

And acknowledge with gratitude their united exertions—

And let every blessing received from them quicken us to the service, and lead us to the enjoyment, of our Tri-une God—]

[r] 1 John i. 3.

MCCCCLXXXI.

THE DEVICES OF SATAN EXPOSED.

2 Cor. ii. 11. *We are not ignorant of his devices.*

MEN in general think but little of Satan and his agency: yet is he the most formidable adversary that we have to contend with. Great was the grief which he occasioned to the apostle Paul; and imminent was the danger to which he reduced many of the Church at Corinth. When one of the members of that Church had been guilty of the crime of incest, Satan stirred up many to support his cause, and to protect him from the censures he had merited. Again, when, at the Apostle's instigation, the Church had inflicted punishment on the offender, and the correction had produced the desired effect, the same subtle enemy prompted many to harden their hearts against him, and, notwithstanding his acknowledged penitence, to refuse him a re-admission to communion with them. In both these ways, he laboured equally to undermine the interests of true religion; and, if St. Paul had not authoritatively interposed to regulate the conduct of that Church by the Gospel-standard, Satan would soon have prevailed to root out of it all vital godliness.

The Apostle's interposition was extremely painful to him. It was "with much anguish of heart and many tears" that he had written the former Epistle: and the thought of having, however reluctantly, occasioned

casioned grief to those whom he had reproved, was so painful to him, that nothing but an assurance of good having accrued from it to them, and a consequent restoration of peace to their souls, could compose his mind[a]. Still however he was bound to proceed in the discharge of his high office, and to urge upon them that duty which they were so backward to perform. And this he does, requesting them to "confirm their love towards the offender, (whose name from delicacy he forbears to mention,) "lest Satan should get a further advantage over them;" for, adds he, "we are not ignorant of his devices." This was a weighty argument: and, that we may enter more fully into it, I propose to shew,

I. The devices of Satan—

It is but little that we know of them: yet, as far as we do know them, it will be profitable to consider,

1. Their number—

[This is great beyond all that we are able to conceive. I doubt whether the sands upon the sea-shore form such a countless multitude as do the devices of this great adversary. There is not a person of any age, or any condition, or under any circumstances, for whom he has not devices peculiarly fitted, as a key to the wards of a most ingenious and complicated lock. For every successive variation in their circumstances, he can in an instant adapt his temptations, and so modify them to the occasion, as to give them the greatest possible influence over the mind of his victim.

It must not be forgotten, that, though we speak of Satan as one, he has millions of other spirits at his command, all co-operating with him with an activity inconceivable, and an energy incessant. All of these were once bright and glorious angels around the throne of God: but "they kept not their first estate;" and, for their wickedness, were cast down to the regions of darkness; whence however for a season they are permitted to emerge, in order that they may exert their powers, and subserve unwittingly the counsels of the Most High. Of these there are distinct orders, called principalities and powers, all under Satan as their head and leader, whose will they execute, and whose designs they promote. Hence, though Satan is limited both as to space and knowledge, he is, by his agents, in every part of the globe,

[a] ver. 2—4.

globe, receiving information from them, and exercising rule by means of them: and hence his devices, founded on such a combination of wisdom, and carried into effect by such an union of power, become so manifold as to exceed what on any other supposition would have been within the power of any finite creature to devise and execute. In a word, they are to any but God himself altogether unsearchable and without number.]

2. Their subtlety—

[We have already said, that he knows how to adapt his temptations to all different persons and occasions. But the subtlety of Satan is yet farther discoverable in this, that he puts such a specious appearance on his temptations, as removes from us all suspicion from whence they come. "He transforms himself into an angel of light[b]," so that his suggestions seem rather to bear the character of heaven than the stamp of hell. Who would think, that he should pretend a zeal for God's honour, and make use of the very perfections of God to countenance and confirm his impious suggestions? Yet so he did, both in his assaults on the first Adam in Paradise, and on the second Adam in the Wilderness. When he sought to prevail over our First Parents, he asked "*Hath* God said, ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" that is, You surely must have made a mistake: it cannot be that so good and bountiful a God should have laid upon you any such unkind restriction. Then again, when Eve replied, that God had not only forbidden the use of that tree, but had enforced the prohibition by the sanction of death, he answered, "Ye shall not surely die;" you may be perfectly assured that God is too good ever to inflict such an awful penalty for so trivial a transgression. In like manner, when he took our Lord to a pinnacle of the temple, and advised him to cast himself down, for that God had engaged to preserve him from all evil, and had given his angels charge over him for that very purpose; his argument was, in fact, You may safely cast yourself down, for God, who cannot lie, has pledged his truth and faithfulness for your preservation. Perhaps there is no one device in which his subtlety more appears than in this: for it is by a pretended zeal for God's honor more than by any other thing whatever, that he leads men to sin, and lulls them asleep in sin. To one, he suggests, that God is too merciful to consign over any man to everlasting torments: to another, that God is too holy and too just ever to pardon such iniquities as *he* has committed: and then to another, that God, as a mighty Sovereign, has ordained men to life, and will save them without any trouble or efforts of their own. In all these instances, he employs the very name

[b] 2 Cor. xi. 14.

name and character of God, in order to subvert God's influence in the world.

Another point wherein his subtlety appears is, in his choice of instruments whereby to operate the more forcibly upon our minds. He will be sure to employ such as will have most influence, and such as we should be least likely to suspect. Whom should he employ to seduce Adam from his allegiance, but Eve, whom God had given him to be his comfort and support? It was most probably with the hope of using her influence to tempt her husband, that he spared Job's wife, whom he might have destroyed, together with his children: and how readily she concurred with Satan, appears from the advice she gave Job in his extremity, "Curse God, and die." When he wanted to instigate Ahab to his destruction, whose agency did he employ but that of the four hundred and fifty prophets, whose united testimony Ahab could not withstand? And when he sought to divert even Jesus himself from the great work of redeeming a ruined world, by whom did he endeavour to accomplish his purpose, but by Peter, a favourite Disciple, and that too under a semblance of love [c]?

Well is he called "that old serpent:" for, in truth, he is "a crooked serpent," whose windings are only equalled by his venom.]

3. Their power—

[But who can estimate this, seeing that "he deceiveth the whole world [d]?" It is on this account that he is called "the god of this world," for he "worketh in all the children of disobedience [e]," and "leads them captive at his will [f]." What he would effect, if suffered to execute all his own pleasure, we may see in Peter, whom he sifted as wheat, and would soon have reduced to chaff, if the Saviour himself had not interceded for him that his faith might not fail [g]. When expelled from the dæmoniac, he entered into a herd of swine, who all ran immediately down the mountain, and perished in the sea. And thus it would be with all of us, if God gave us over to his uncontrolled dominion; we should precipitate ourselves speedily into irrecoverable and endless ruin. In the hands of that "great dragon," we should be no more than as a lamb in the jaws of a roaring lion.]

But though in all their extent they cannot be known by us, yet, as far as they can be known, we are anxious to mark,

II. The

[c] Matt. xvi. 22, 23. [d] Rev. xii. 9. [e] 2 Cor. iv. 4. Eph. ii. 2.
[f] 2 Tim. ii. 26. [g] Luke xxii. 31, 32.

II. The importance of being thoroughly acquainted with them—

It is of unspeakable importance to us all,

1. Individually—

[There is not an individual amongst us, "at whose right hand he does not stand [g]," and whom he is not seeking to destroy. "As a roaring lion, he is going about continually for this very end," seeking to find some one off his guard, that he may prevail the more easily against him. He notices particularly *the dispositions of our mind*, and is constantly on the watch that he may ensnare us by means of our besetting sin. Does he see David inclining to pride and vain confidence? he puts it into his heart to give an order for the numbering of the people; well knowing that by means of that act God would be provoked to execute upon him and on his people some heavy judgment [h]. Did he see in Judas the love of money? by that he draws him to betray his Lord. Did he behold in Peter the fear of man? he instigates several to accuse him as a follower of Christ, and thereby causes him to deny his Lord with oaths and curses. Did he see Ananias and Sapphira affecting man's applause? he puts it into their heart to appear liberal at a cheap rate; and then, for the preservation of their character, to lie unto the Holy Ghost. Thus he will watch the motions of our hearts; and, by means of some evil propensity in us, drive us to the commission of some heinous sin. Nor is he inattentive even to *the state and temperament of our bodies;* since from that also he can derive much advantage against us. If he perceive that our bodies are enervated by heavy afflictions, or such disorders as induce both bodily and mental debility, he will be sure to assault the soul, in order to drive it to despondency. The whole system being weakened, he hopes that he shall the more easily prevail against us to destroy us. In a word, he knows the weak side of all, and will be sure to assault us there. Hence arises a particular necessity for watching against him with all possible care. Whatever there be, either in our minds or bodies, that seems to favour his temptations, it is only with our own concurrence that he can effect any thing: against our will he can do nothing. "If we resist him, he is constrained to flee from us." But the difficulty is, to know when, and where, and how he will assault us. Could the bird certainly know that the fowler was laying a snare for him, he would take care not to run into the net; and could the fish be fully aware of the hook, he would never be induced to swallow the bait. Thus, if we knew beforehand what the devices were whereby Satan

[g] Josh. iii. 1, 2. [h] 1 Chron. xxi. 1.

Satan was studying to deceive us, we should stand on our guard against him. But it requires a very deep knowledge of "his wiles," and a constant watchfulness over every motion of our hearts, to resist him with effect.]

2. In our collective capacity—

[Whole Churches are often grievously distracted by this powerful adversary. Where Christ is sowing wheat, he will be active in sowing tares. It was thus at Corinth: he had prevailed to a great extent, first in setting the people against all discipline, and then in urging them to carry their discipline beyond all reasonable bounds. This latter device would have been attended with incalculable evil, if it had not been exposed and counteracted by Paul: the offender himself might have been driven to despair, and constrained to go back for happiness to the ungodly world. The weak in the Church would have been greatly discouraged: and Unbelievers would have been led to think of Christianity as the most odious system that had ever been professed in the world. In like manner, there are in every Church some circumstances which Satan would over-rule for the dishonour of God and the injury of immortal souls. Against these therefore, whatever they may be, both Minister and People should be much upon their guard. In matters of *doctrine*, our subtle adversary may easily lead us astray; and in matters of *discipline*, he may easily succeed in stirring up contentions and divisions amongst us. If we neglect to purge out the old leaven, the whole lump will soon be leavened: and if with too indiscriminate a hand we attempt to pluck up the tares, we may root up also much of the wheat along with it. We are in danger on every side: and if we do not, with the utmost possible care, guard against his devices, he will, in some way or other, "get advantage of us," to the weakening of our hands, and the great discouragement of our hearts.]

As an IMPROVEMENT of the subject, we will briefly shew how most effectually to counteract his devices—

1. Be ever on your guard against them—

[You have to contend, "not against flesh and blood only, but against principalities and powers:" and therefore must be continually on your guard. This is the advice which Peter gives, and gives from bitter experience. He had been warned by his Lord to watch and pray, and especially because Satan was peculiarly anxious to destroy him. But he slept, yea slept repeatedly, though repeatedly awaked by his Lord: and the consequence was, that he "fell into the snare of the Devil." Hence he warns others to "be sober and vigilant, because

because the Devil as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour." Moreover, it was in consequence of the Saviour "praying for him that his faith might not fail," that he did not ultimately perish, like Judas, in deep despair. Hence he adds this further direction, "whom resist, stedfast in the faith[i]." It is scarcely to be hoped, however vigilant you may be, that Satan shall never get any advantage over you; but you must not on that account despond, as if he were invincible: for your God has pledged himself that "he will bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Rely therefore on his word; and in the strength of it go forth again and again to the combat; praying always, that God would either "not lead you into temptation," or, if he do, that he would "deliver you from *the evil one*." It is said of young men in Christ, "that the word of God abideth in them, and they have overcome the wicked one." Let it abide in you also; and success is yours. The Lord Jesus Christ drew all his arrows from that quiver: "It is written," was the reply with which he vanquished every temptation: and with "that sword of the Spirit, the Word of God," you shall speedily and eternally prevail.]

2. Look to the Lord Jesus Christ as your Protector and Deliverer—

[He is "stronger than the strong man armed:" and, whilst he yet hanged upon the cross, he bruised the serpent's head; yes, "by death he overcame him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil." On the cross "he spoiled all the principalities and powers of hell, triumphing over them in it:" and in his ascension "he led captivity itself captive." Then was the god of this world vanquished: "then was the prince of this world cast out." It is therefore only with a vanquished foe that we have to contend; for "the prince of this world is judged." Go forth then "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Our almighty Joshua calls you to come and put your feet on the necks of your vanquished enemies. Do it; and assure yourselves, that through him you shall be "more than conquerors over all." For a little time this subtle adversary will yet continue his assaults. It was only "for a season" that he suspended his efforts even against the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Depend upon it, therefore, that you shall have some "thorn in the flesh, some messenger of Satan, still to buffet you." But "be strong and very courageous." "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." "Gird on the whole armour" provided for you in the Gospel; and "quit yourselves like men." If you say, "True, but I am weak;" know that, "when you are

[i] 1 Pet. v. 8.

are weak, then are you strong;" and "the strength of Christ shall be perfected in your weakness." The palm of victory, and the victor's robe, are already provided for you: and, after a few more conflicts, your triumph shall be complete. Already may you "behold Satan fallen from heaven, like lightning[k]." Hallelujah! hallelujah!]

[k] Luke x. 18.

DCCCCLXXXII.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MINISTRY.

2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. *We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death: and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?*

THE difficulties which faithful Ministers have to encounter, are great and numerous. Through the goodness of God, the flames of persecution are not permitted to rage against them, as in the Apostolic age; but the embers are by no means extinguished; hatred and contempt are yet the portion of all who will bear their testimony for God, and reprove the wickedness of an ungodly world. But if "their afflictions abound, their consolations abound also." They are sustained by the providence and grace of God, and have reason to "thank him for causing them always to triumph in Christ." They have also the satisfaction of seeing, that God, by their instrumentality, "makes manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place." And though they are unhappily the occasion of deeper condemnation to those who reject their message, yet are they accepted and approved of God, as well in their ineffectual, as in their successful, labours.

This is the consolation expressed in the text; from whence we shall take occasion to shew,

I. In what way the Ministry of the Gospel is regarded by God—

God is pleased to speak of himself as delighting in the Ministry of his Gospel—

[That which his servants labour to diffuse, is, the knowledge

ledge of Christ. They set forth incessantly his name, his work, and offices; and exalt him as the only Saviour of the world———This, like the sacrifice which Noah[a], and which Christ himself, offered[b], is to God "an odour of a sweet smell." It is to him "as ointment poured forth."]

And good reason there is why he should be so delighted with it—

[The Gospel of Christ is that wherein all the glory of God is concentrated and made manifest. We may behold the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God in the works of creation and providence; but in the work of Redemption we see an united display of all his perfections: "Mercy and truth meet together; and righteousness and peace kiss each other[d]"———No wonder therefore that his Ministers, who proclaim this Gospel, are considered as rendering to him an acceptable service.]

Nor does his approbation of it at all depend on the success with which it is attended—

[God is certainly well pleased when any "are saved" by his Gospel: for then all his gracious purposes respecting them are accomplished———Then is his dear Son honoured, and, as it were, rewarded "for the travail of his soul[e]." Then "Mercy," his darling attribute, "in which he chiefly delights," has free and full scope for exercise.

But God is no less glorified "in them also that perish:" for they must to all eternity acknowledge the goodness of God towards them; and confess his justice in the judgments inflicted on them.

To *us* the punishment of the wicked is a ground of lamentation only: but we must not "imagine that God is such an one as ourselves:" Whatever tends to his glory, is pleasing in his sight.]

Our pleasure, however, in ministering the Gospel, is mixed with pain, when we reflect on,

II. The effects which it produces upon men—

To some we are an occasion of deeper condemnation—

[It had been foretold by the Prophet, that Christ should be, not merely for a sanctuary, but also for a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence[f]. The holy Patriarch, who embraced our Saviour in his arms, declared, that he was set for the

[a] Gen. viii. 21.
[b] Eph. v. 2.
[c] Cant. i. 3.
[d] Ps. lxxxv. 10.
[e] Isai. liii. 11.
[f] Isai. viii. 14.

the fall, as well as for the rising again, of many in Israel[g]. Our Lord himself also attests, that the design of his coming was, to shut the eyes of those who proudly imagined that they saw aright, as well as to open the eyes of those who were sensible of their blindness[h]. And the ministrations of his Apostles were actually attended with these contrary effects[i]. Thus *we* also find it at this time: We are, however unwillingly, the unhappy occasion of increasing the misery of many whom we labour to save. Some hear our word, and disregard it—others despise it—others abuse it, to encourage themselves in their evil ways—For all such persons it would have been better never to have heard the word at all[k].]

To others, we are the means and instruments of their salvation—

[As odours which are most offensive to some are most pleasing and refreshing to others, so are we in the discharge of our Ministry. Some hear our word, and receive it with joy and gratitude. The name of Jesus becomes truly precious to them: they trust in him for salvation: they are brought by him into a state of reconciliation with God: they receive out of his fulness all the grace which they stand in need of: they are enabled by him to live a new and heavenly life; and, finally, they are exalted by him to a state of everlasting happiness and glory. In effecting this blessed work, we are his highly-honoured instruments: by our word he quickens them from the dead: by our word he gives them life more abundantly: by our word he carries on, and perfects, the work he has begun. And thus, while to some we are "a savour of death to their death" and condemnation, we are to others "a savour of life to their eternal life" and salvation.]

Well might St. Paul, in contemplating these effects of his Ministry, express his sense of,

III. Its arduousness and importance—

Let it only be considered what a sacred trust is committed to us: on the one hand the glory of God, and on the other hand the salvation of man, is entrusted to our care: What a treasure is this to be deposited in such earthen vessels as we are! "Who is sufficient for these things?" Who is sufficient,

1. In wisdom and knowledge—

[To

[g] Luke ii. 34. [h] John ix. 39.
[i] 1 Peter ii. 7, 8. with Acts xxviii. 25—27.
[k] John xv. 22 Matt. xi. 20—24.

[To discharge the ministerial office aright, we should understand in all its bearings that mystery which was hid from ages—the redemption of man by the incarnation and death of God's only-begotten Son. We should be acquainted also with all the devices of Satan, whereby he is continually labouring to defeat the gracious purposes of our God. We should be able also to discriminate between all the shades of Christian experience, so as to administer suitable advice to all who are under our care. The effects of ignorance would be most fatal: We should be "blind leaders of the blind;" and thus, together with our deluded hearers, should "fall into the ditch." Alas! alas! Who has not reason to lament his utter insufficiency for so great a work?]

2. In zeal and love—

[If we duly considered the importance of our work, we should find neither time nor inclination to think of any thing else. We should scarcely allow ourselves the necessary refreshments of food and sleep. Persons who see us a little earnest are ready to give us credit for our zeal, or perhaps to condemn us for it: but we should not minister in the way we do, if we justly appreciated the value of a soul, or the glory of our God. No, truly; We should never think of you but with the tenderest compassion, nor even speak to you but with floods of tears. Whether we spake to you in public or in private, we should take no denial: and, in our addresses to God in your behalf, we should "give him no rest, till he arose, and made our Jerusalem a praise in the earth."]

APPLICATION—

[Inquire, What improvement you have made of our Ministry? We ask, not merely whether you approve of what you hear? but whether you find it a sweet savour unto your souls? Does it endear to you the Lord Jesus Christ? Does it bring you into closer and more habitual communion with him? Does it stir you up to live more to his glory? Let not our labours of love be the means of augmenting your guilt and misery. Force us not to be "swift witnesses against you" in the day of judgment: but rather seek, that we may have you as our joy and crown of rejoicing in that day.

In the meantime, "pray for us." Our responsibility is great and fearful. It is no light matter to answer for our own souls: but to have your souls also required at our hands, is formidable in the extreme. May God pity our infirmities, and pardon our insufficiency! Yea, may he so "perfect his own strength in our weakness," that, through our feeble Ministrations, his name may be glorified, and your souls be saved!]

DCCCCLXXXIII.

CHRISTIANS ARE EPISTLES OF CHRIST.

2 Cor. iii. 2, 3. *Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.*

HATEFUL and detestable as boasting is, there are occasions whereon it may be proper, and even necessary. As far as a man's own reputation merely is concerned, he need not be forward to vindicate himself from false accusations: if he be a holy and consistent character, he may safely leave himself in God's hands, indifferent about the censures of an ungodly world: but where the honour of the Gospel is at stake, and there is danger of its influence being undermined by the falsehoods that are circulated, it is by no means unworthy even of an Apostle to refute the calumnies that are raised against him. There were at Corinth false teachers, who sought by all possible means to destroy the character of the apostle Paul, and who even denied his claim to Apostolic authority. In answer to their malignant accusations, St. Paul, in his former Epistle to the Corinthians, says, "Am I not an Apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not you my work in the Lord? If I be not an Apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord[a]." Thus, in this Epistle also he vindicates himself as ministering, not like the false teachers, who corrupted the word of God, but with a holy integrity befitting his high office[b]. Yet apprehensive lest he should be misunderstood, as though he felt a need of such commendations either from himself or others, he appealed to his Converts themselves as proofs sufficient of his Apostleship, even such proofs as carried, to the most thoughtless beholder, their own evidence along with them: "Ye are our epistle, &c. &c.:" that is, 'I need

[a] 1 Cor. ix. 1, 2. [b] 2 Cor. ii. 17.

need not epistles from men, since ye yourselves are epistles from the Lord Jesus Christ, testifying that I am his servant, and that the Gospel which I preach is the very truth of God.'

In further considering these words, we may notice from them,

I. The character of all true Converts—

Christians are epistles of Christ written for the instruction of the whole world. Epistles from man to man, such as were those which the false teachers carried with them as letters of recommendation from Church to Church, were written with ink; but Christ's epistles are written with the Spirit of the living God; and not, as the law of the ten commandments was, in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart; to which God alone can have access, and on which God alone can make any valuable impression. Ministers indeed are used by him as instruments, as the word also is; but these can effect no more than a pen or ink can without the hand of a writer: "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water; but it is God alone who can give the increase[c]."

By these epistles the Lord Jesus Christ teaches men,

1. What is that change that must be wrought on every Child of man—

[Christians once walked after the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were children of wrath, even as others[d]. But a great change has been wrought in them: they have been "turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." They are become "new creatures:" their views, their desires, their pursuits, are all new. The change that has taken place in them is not unlike that of a river, which, from flowing rapidly towards the ocean, is arrested in its course, and made by the refluent tide to return with equal rapidity towards the fountain-head. Thus are these turned "in the spirit of their minds," the whole bent of which was formerly after the things of time and sense, but is now directed to the service of the living God[e].

These being still *in* the world, though not *of* it, are living instructors

[c] 1 Cor. iii. 5—7. [d] Eph. ii. 2, 3. [e] 1 Thess. i. 9.

instructors to all around them: they are epistles "known and read of all men." From the Scriptures men will turn their eyes; but from these epistles they cannot: they are constrained to see the truths recorded in them: and, however they may hate the change which they behold, they are compelled to acknowledge it: and they are admonished by it, that, without such a change, they themselves can never be partakers of the kingdom of heaven. In a word, by every true convert, Christ speaks to all, as once he did to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven."]

2. By what means that change is to be effected—

[However the followers of Christ may differ from each other in minor points, they all agree in founding their hopes of salvation entirely on his atoning blood, and on the effectual operation of his Spirit within them: the declaration of every one amongst them is, "Surely in the Lord, and in him alone, have I righteousness and strength[f]."

These things then does the Lord Jesus Christ proclaim to the world by them. By them he says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." "There is no other name but mine given under heaven whereby men may be saved;" "nor is there any other foundation whereon any man can build" his hopes. And, as they look to me for their acceptance with God, so must they also do for the gift of my Spirit, who alone can begin, or carry on, or perfect, a work of grace in their souls. It is in reality this testimony which so offends the world. If they were taught to rely on their own merits, or to depend on their own arm, they would extol the persons who thus distinguished themselves by their superior attainments in holiness: but, when they are told that all their hope must be in the righteousness of another, and in strength communicated from above, they pour contempt upon it all as foolishness. Nevertheless such are the lessons which Christians teach to all around them; and such are the instructions which Christ conveys by them to a benighted world.]

Whilst they thus speak from Christ, they give us just occasion also to notice,

II. The honour they reflect on the Gospel of Christ—

They are all not merely epistles *from* Christ, but witnesses also *for* him. As the Jews were witnesses for God to all the nations of the earth, since no other God could ever have effected what he had wrought for

[f] Isai. xlv. 24.

for them [g], and as all the persons whom Jesus healed were witnesses for him as the true Messiah [h], so are all true Converts witnesses,

1. Of the truth of the Gospel—

[What other system ever wrought as that has done? Look at all the means which men have devised for obtaining reconciliation with God; and see if they have ever operated so powerfully, and so beneficially, on the souls of those who have embraced them, as has the simple doctrine of the cross? No: by no other doctrine did God ever work; nor by any other doctrine will he ever work, for the sanctification and salvation of a ruined world. Go to any place under heaven where Christ is not exalted as the only Saviour of the world, or where the Spirit of the living God is not honoured as the only source of all real holiness of heart and life, and see what the state is of those who are so taught: will there be found among them any work like that on the day of Pentecost? Will the word preached there be quick, and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword? Will "the weapons used there be found mighty to pull down the strong holds" of sin and Satan, and to "bring men's thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ?" No: God does not, and will not, work by any thing but a simple exhibition of Christ crucified. It is the Gospel only that is "the rod of his strength," or that will ever prove "the power of God to the salvation of the soul." But where that is preached, these effects are wrought; multitudes are "brought out of darkness into marvellous light," and are enabled to shew by their works the reality of their faith; and thus they give undoubted evidence, that the Gospel which is ministered unto them, is the true Gospel. As Christ said of the people whom he had healed, "the works that I do, the same bear witness of me," so may we say of these persons, that they are "seals," whereby God himself attests the Mission of his Servants, and the truth of the doctrine which they deliver.]

2. Of the efficacy of the Gospel—

[It is not a mere external change which the Gospel effects, but a change of the whole soul, from sin and sorrow to holiness and joy. The "peace" which it introduces into the troubled mind, "passeth all understanding:" and the "joy" to which it elevates the repenting sinner, is "unspeakable and glorified." In respect of sanctification, it does not produce absolute perfection; for "there is not a man on earth that liveth and sinneth not;" but it transforms the soul in a very wonderful

[g] Isai. xliii. 10—12. [h] Matt. xi. 25.

wonderful manner, and changes it progressively, if not perfectly, "into the very image of God, in righteousness and true holiness." In short, it brings the Lord Jesus Christ and the Believer into so near an union with each other, that they are one body[i], and "one spirit[k]," partakers of the same blessings in this world[l], and heirs of the same glory in the world to come[m].

What other doctrine ever did, or can, effect such a change as this? Not even God's law, which he wrote in tables of stone, could operate to such an extent as this: the Gospel alone is competent to such a task: as St. Paul has said; "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, did; that is, he condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit[n]." Moreover, it is not on those only who are of a better and more pliant frame of mind, that the Gospel thus operates, but on the vilest of the human race; as indisputably appeared in the Corinthian Church[o]———The instances too of such efficacy are not rare, but frequent. On one day were three thousand such converts made; and in every age from that period to the present has the same power been exerted to change the lion to a lamb, and "a desert to the garden of the Lord." Such converts "shine as lights in a dark world," and, by "holding forth the word of life" as epistles from Christ, they shew that "the Minister has not run in vain, nor laboured in vain[p]."]

ADDRESS—

1. Seek to have the mind of Christ more fully inscribed upon your hearts—

[Beloved Brethren, let not a day pass without your having some divine lesson written more clearly and more legibly upon your souls. Bring your hearts daily to the Lord Jesus Christ, and present them as a tablet to him, that he may write upon them something which they have not hitherto contained. And when you come up to the House of God, come, not to gratify curiosity, or to perform a duty merely, but to spread your hearts again before the Lord, that, by the instrumentality of his Minister, and the operation of his Word and Spirit, he may inscribe on them some further lesson, which shall attract the notice of an ungodly world, and constrain them to acknowledge that God is with you of a truth. If there be a blot upon your hearts, intreat him to erase it: and whatever is but indistinctly written, intreat him to trace it over

[i] Eph. v. 30. [k] 1 Cor. vi. 17.
[l] John xvii. 13, 22, 23, 26. [m] Rom. viii. 17.
[n] Rom. viii. 3, 4. [o] 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. [p] Phil. ii. 15, 16.

over again and again, till it shall appear in characters worthy of the Divine Author, and convey to all who behold it a decisive proof of its Divine original. And, at the close of every day, examine the contents of the epistle, to see what progress has been made, and what yet remains to be added for its perfection. Nor ever forget by whom the characters must be inscribed: it is "by the Spirit of the living God," and by the Lord Jesus Christ through him. If you look to any other quarter, you will be disappointed: but, if you go to Christ for the gift of his Spirit, and desire really to have his whole mind and will written upon your hearts, it shall be done; till you are "changed into his image from glory to glory by the Spirit of our God."]

2. Endeavour to exhibit the whole mind of Christ to a careless and ungodly world—

[Let there not be seen in you those tempers and dispositions which dishonour the Christian profession, and make the Gospel a stumbling-block to the world. In too many professors of religion there is little seen but pride, and forwardness, and self-confidence, and loquacity, and uncharitableness, and a disputatious temper, and a party spirit. But are these the characters inscribed by Christ? No: but by that wicked one, who counterfeits the hand of Christ, on purpose to bring him and his Gospel into general contempt. Whatever there is of such dispositions within you, get them obliterated without delay, and all the graces of humility, and meekness, and love inscribed in their place[q]. People will judge of our Ministry by the lives of those who attend it; and will impute to our doctrines every evil which they can find in you. This is unreasonable indeed: but they will do so; and we cannot prevent it; and if they see in you what is odious, they will represent it as the necessary fruit of the system you profess. Take care then that "the way of truth be not evil spoken of through you." Endeavour rather so to "make your light shine before men, that all who behold it may glorify your Father which is in heaven:" yea, "let it shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day."]

[q] Col. iii. 12, 13.

DCCCCLXXXIV.

THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL ABOVE THAT OF THE LAW.

2 Cor. iii. 7—11. *If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could*

could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? for if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth: for if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

THE Apostle, in vindicating his claim to Apostolic authority against the false teachers at Corinth who disputed it, appeals to the Corinthians themselves as proofs and evidences of his Divine Mission; since the work of God upon their hearts abundantly manifested, that his ministrations among them had been attended with a power more than human[a]. In thus substantiating his title to Apostolic authority, he is led, incidentally as it were, to mention the excellency of that Gospel which he was sent to preach; and from thence to shew, that the deference due to him was the greater, in proportion to the excellency of the Gospel which he ministered unto them. Honourable as the state of the Levitical priesthood was, it was not to be compared with that of those who preached the Gospel; because the law, as ministered in the "letter" of it, proved fatal to all who trusted in it; whereas the Gospel was a source of "life" to all who cordially embraced it: the one, as a mere "letter, killed;" the other, as a quickening "Spirit, gave life[b]."

The Apostle, having touched upon this point, proceeds to open it more fully in the words which we have just read: for the fuller understanding of which we shall consider,

I. The different terms by which the law and the Gospel are here designated—

The law is called "the ministration of death and of condemnation."

[The law as given to Adam in Paradise "was ordained to life," and would have entitled him to life if he had continued

[a] ver. 2, 3, 5. with 1 Cor. ix. 2. [b] ver. 6.

tinued obedient to it[c]: but, as republished by Moses, it was never intended to give man any title to life; nor could it possibly give life, because every human being is corrupt, and incapable of rendering to it a perfect obedience[d]. The law is a perfect transcript of God's mind and will. It makes known to man the whole extent of his duty; and requires a perfect obedience to every one of its commands. If transgressed in any one particular, it denounces death: it says to every soul of man, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." At the same time that it thus rigorously exacts a perfect obedience, it neither imparts to man any strength for obedience, nor provides any remedy for one single act of disobedience: and hence it is called in our text, "a ministration of death and of condemnation." Its voice to all is, "Do this and live: transgress, and perish." But as every man has transgressed it, and consequently can never do all that it commands, it consigns to death every Child of man, according as St. Paul has said; "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, *Cursed* is *every* one that *continueth* not in *all* things that are written in the book of the law to *do* them[e]." We must not desire to do them, but "*do*" them; not some, but "*all;*" not for a time, but for a "*continuance,*" from the first to the last moment of our lives: nor is there any exception in favour of any Child of man; for "*every* one" must stand or fall, be saved or "*cursed,*" according to this law; and consequently, every man being of necessity born under this law, "every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God[f]."]

The Gospel is called "a ministration of righteousness and of the Spirit"—

[The law condemning all, the Gospel applies a remedy: it reveals a Saviour, who, by his own obedience unto death, has "made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness[g]." This righteousness is revealed to us in the Gospel to be apprehended by faith[h]; and it is actually given "unto," and put "upon," "all who believe" in Jesus[i]. This righteousness is totally independent of any obedience to the law on our part: it exists in Christ alone, and is imputed unto us by faith[k]: and, so far from being augmented by any works of ours, it would be made void by the smallest dependence on our own works[l]; and we must renounce all hope in ourselves, before we can have any part or lot in the righteousness of Christ[m]. Hence the Gospel is called "a ministration

[c] Rom. vii. 10.
[d] Gal. iii. 21. with Rom. viii. 3.
[e] Gal. iii. 10.
[f] Rom. iii. 19.
[g] Dan. ix. 24.
[h] Rom. i. 17.
[i] Rom. iii. 21, 22.
[k] Rom. iv. 5, 6.
[l] Gal. ii. 21. & v. 4.
[m] Phil. iii. 9.

stration of righteousness," because it reveals a righteousness commensurate with all the demands of the law, and offers that righteousness to every man who will believe in Christ. It declares that "Christ himself is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth[n];" and that the law was given as a ministration of death on purpose to shut men up to this righteousness, and to constrain them to seek salvation in the way provided for them[o].

The Gospel is also "the ministration of the Spirit." In the first ages, the Spirit was given in his miraculous powers to attest the truth and Divine authority of the Gospel. That end having been fully answered, his miraculous powers are no longer exercised: but his gracious influences still continue, and will continue to the end of time. Still is he sent "to convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:" still it is his office "to glorify Christ," and to "take of the things that are Christ's, and to shew them unto us:" still does he enlighten the minds, and sanctify the souls, of them that believe: still does he, as the Comforter promised to the Church, operate in the saints as "a Spirit of adoption," "witnessing with their spirits that they are the Children of God," and "sealing them unto the day of redemption." To none is he imparted for these ends but through the Gospel of Christ; and, wherever the Gospel is faithfully ministered, he does accompany it with these blessed influences; producing holiness and comfort in all who truly receive it.

Thus the Gospel supplies what the law knew nothing of. —We have before said, that the law spake nothing of pardon to the guilty, or of strength to the weak: but the Gospel administers both; and *that* too in such an abundant measure, as is adequate to the necessities of the whole world: it ministers righteousness sufficient to justify the most guilty sinner upon earth; and imparts the Spirit, so that the weakest may be more than conqueror over all the enemies of his soul.]

Corresponding with this description of the law and of the Gospel were,

II. The different degrees of glory pertaining to each—

The law was truly glorious—

[It was proclaimed by God himself with an audible voice in the midst of such displays of glory as had never been seen from the foundation of the world: and, that it might never be forgotten, it was written also by the finger of God in tables of stone. Moreover, the person through whom it was given to Israel, had such glory imparted to him, that the

[n] Rom. x. 4. [o] Gal. iii. 22, 23.

the people of Israel were no more able to look stedfastly upon his face, than upon the face of the meridian sun. Whilst this reflected a very high degree of glory upon the law itself, it was especially intended to intimate to all Israel, that they were unable to apprehend the full scope and meaning of the law[p]! They thought it a covenant whereby they were to obtain acceptance with God; whereas it had an infinitely higher office, even that of "a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith[q]." But this, which was its chief glory, they were not able to discern: and, in consequence of their ignorance of its true meaning, they supposed it to be of everlasting obligation; whereas it was, together with all its attendant rites and ceremonies, to continue only till Christ should come, and then to give way to a more perfect dispensation. Still, however, when all the circumstances attending its promulgation are considered, it was certainly exceeding glorious.]

But the Gospel was far more glorious—

[As imparting life, it must of necessity be far more glorious than that which only occasioned death: for the law did really occasion death; inasmuch as, if there had been no law, there would have been no transgression, and consequently neither sin nor death[r]. In revealing such a way of salvation too, it is inconceivably glorious. How mysterious is that record, "that God hath given unto us eternal life; and this life is in his Son: that whoso hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life[s]:" and finally, that "he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we, who had no righteousness, might be made the righteousness of God in him[t]!" Well is this called, "The glorious Gospel of the blessed God[u]!" for in it are "riches" of love that are altogether "unsearchable," and heights and depths that can never be explored.

That the Gospel too transforms the soul into the Divine image is another ground of excellence, which exalts it infinitely above the law. The law rather irritates and inflames the corrupt principle within us, than tends at all to the subjugation of it[x]; but the Gospel both frees us from the dominion of sin, and liberates us from all its penal consequences: "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death[y]."

The Gospel too, as being God's last dispensation, will endure for ever; whilst the law, which was only introductory to it, is altogether abolished. So that in this respect also its superiority to the law is great and indisputable.

Compare

[p] Ver. 13. [q] Gal. iii. 24.
[r] Rom iv. 15 and v. 13, and 1 John iii. 4.
[s] 1 John v. 11, 12. [t] 2 Cor. v. 21.
[u] Rom. vii. 5, 8. [x] Rom. viii. 2.

Compare the two then, and see the difference between them: the lustre imparted by the one was external, on the face of Moses; the change wrought by the other is internal, in the heart and in the soul. In the one, the radiance shone from one only; in the other, it is conferred on all who believe. In the one, it passed away quickly; in the other, it is abiding, even to the end of life, and through eternal ages. In the one, it was to be veiled from the sight of all; in the other, it is to be displayed for the instruction of all, that all may see in it the hand of God[y], and learn to glorify its Divine Author[z]. Well then may it be said, that "that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth:" for in truth, though the law shone like the starry heavens in the brightest night, the Gospel, like the meridian sun, has eclipsed its splendor, and cast a veil over all its glory.]

Let not this however be with us a matter of speculation only: let us consider,

III. The conduct which our superior dispensation demands—And,

1. Of Ministers—

[The influence which these considerations had upon the Apostle was, to make him "use great plainness of speech." He would not, like Moses, "put a veil upon his face," to conceal any part of the splendor of this Gospel[a]; but would preach it with all fidelity, and, by the fullest possible "manifestation of it, commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God[b]." This then is what we must do; and what, through grace, it is our delight to do. Yes, Brethren, we declare to you freely that the law, as a covenant of works, is abrogated; and a new covenant, with a better Mediator, and with better promises, is proposed to you in the Gospel. This new covenant provides, as you have heard, righteousness for the guilty, and strength for the weak; and authorizes every Believer to say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength[c]." O that we might be instrumental to the bringing you into a near and full acquaintance with this better dispensation! Never would we forget that our one great office is, to make it known to you, and to bring you to the enjoyment of all its blessings. We would go up to the holy Mount ourselves to receive it from God, and we would come down with it in our hands and in our hearts to proclaim it to you[d]. We do proclaim it to you at this moment: we do declare

[y] ver. 2, 3.
[z] ver. 12, 13.
[a] Matt. v. 16.
[b] 2 Cor. iv. 2.
[c] Isai. xlv. 24.
[d] 1 Cor. xv. 3. 1 John i. 1—3.

declare to you, that the most guilty sinner in the universe may now find acceptance with God through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ: and we declare also, that a new heart shall be given you, and a new spirit shall be put within you, and the whole law of God be written in your hearts, if only you will believe in him: for he will send down his Holy Spirit upon you, according to his promise, and, by his gracious influences upon your souls, will "cause you to keep his statutes and his judgments[e]." All this shall be "ministered unto you abundantly through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," if only you will come unto him; and it shall be given you "freely, without money and without price." ——]

2. Of the Church at large——

[Your minds should be intent on this great subject: you should seek to grow daily in the knowledge of it: you should come up to the House of God with the same preparation of heart to receive the word of God from your Ministers, as the Israelites did to receive the law from the hands of Moses: your state of mind should be like that of Cornelius and his company, when Peter came to preach the tidings of salvation to them; "Now are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God[f]." And as there is no veil put before our face, so you should beg of God that no veil may remain on your hearts. The law was hid from Israel without involving them in any guilt or danger, if only they complied with it as far as it was revealed to them: but "if the Gospel be hid from you, you must eternally perish[g];" because it is the only possible way of salvation, and can save only by operating effectually both on the understanding and the heart[h]. O then beg of God to counteract the devices of Satan, who strives continually to hide this Gospel from you; and intreat him "to shine into your hearts to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ[i]".

At the same time you must remember, that in this respect the obedience you pay must correspond with the privileges you enjoy. Being liberated from the law, you are released also from all servile hopes and fears: and your service must be no longer that of a slave, but of a child: you must serve God, not in the oldness of the letter, but in newness of spirit[k]; and in this way you will attain all the blessings which the Gospel is intended to impart. The intent of this Gospel is, to assimilate you to that Saviour who proclaims it to you.

Whilst

[e] Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.
[f] Acts x. 33.
[g] 2 Cor. iv. 4.
[h] 1 Thess. ii. 13.
[i] 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6.
[k] Rom. vii. 6.

Whilst you receive it from him, a portion of his splendor must cleave unto you, so that all who behold you may see of a truth that you have been with Jesus. You must be "his epistles" to an ungodly world: and so plain must be the characters written on your heart and life, that they may be "known and read of all men." Daily must this writing be more visible; and daily shall the radiance around you increase, if you live near to the Lord, contemplating continually the wonders of his love: for, "if with unveiled face you behold as in a mirrour the glory of the Lord, you shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord[1]"———]

[1] ver. 18.

DCCCCLXXXV.

THE FUTURE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS.

2 Cor. iii. 15, 16. *Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn unto the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.*

THERE is confessedly much obscurity in different parts of the Sacred Volume: even in St. Paul's writings there are, as St. Peter tells us, "some things hard to be understood." And this is no more than might well be expected, considering the depth of the subjects treated of, even all the hidden counsels of the Almighty, and the necessary ambiguity of prophetic language, in order to conceal the purposes of the Deity till the prophecies should be unravelled by subsequent events. Other difficulties arise out of errors, which in the course of so many hundred years have, through the inadvertence of transcribers, crept into different copies of the holy Scriptures. But, after all, the chief source of obscurity is, the veil that is on the heart of man, (the veil of prejudice, and ignorance, and unbelief,) which conceals from unconverted men even the plainest truths. To intimate the existence of such a veil, was one of the reasons for Moses putting a veil over his face when he came down from the holy Mount with the tables of the law in his hands. He intimated

intimated thereby, that the children of Israel could not look to the end of that which was to be abolished; that is, that they could not comprehend the nature of the dispensation which he was commissioned to proclaim; seeing that there was a veil upon their hearts, "by which *their minds were blinded*[a]." That veil remained on their hearts during the whole of that dispensation; and, notwithstanding "it is done away in Christ," so that, if they were disposed to avail themselves of the light which Christianity reflects on their inspired writings, they might now acquire a clear insight into them, "the veil yet remains on their hearts even unto this day." But it shall not be always so: there is a time coming, "when that infatuated nation shall turn unto the Lord; and then the veil shall be taken away."

Let us consider,

I. Their present blindness—

Truly there is a veil, a thick veil, upon their hearts; so that to this day they cannot see,

1. The scope and intent of the Mosaic dispensation—

[The Mosaic dispensation was partly legal, partly evangelical, and partly a national covenant, relating only to the temporal state of the Jewish people. *The law of the ten commandments* was a re-publication of the law originally written upon the heart of man, by an obedience to which our First Parents were to obtain eternal life. *The ceremonial observances* were appointed to shadow forth the salvation offered to us in the Gospel, and to prepare the minds of the Jews for the Messiah, who should in due time be sent to fulfil all that was required by the moral law, and shadowed forth in the ceremonial. The moral law was not given them in order that they might seek justification by it; but in order to shew them, that it was impossible for fallen man ever to be justified by it, and that, as transgressors, they must look for salvation solely by faith in the promised Messiah. But of these things they had no idea: they could see nothing in the whole dispensation but a covenant made with them as God's peculiar people; by an obedience to which, according to the mere letter of it, they supposed that they should obtain all the blessings both of time and eternity. And this is the notion which

[a] ver. 13, 14.

which has been entertained by them in all successive ages even to the present day. Notwithstanding it is impossible for them now, by reason of their dispersion, to obey their ceremonial law, they still suppose that they are to be saved by their own obedience. They have no idea of the atonement that has been offered for them, or of the righteousness that has been wrought out for them, by Christ's obedience unto death: they cannot raise their minds above a compliance with certain rites, (many of them appointed by man only, and substituted in the place of those which were appointed of God,) and an external conformity with the mere letter of the moral law: like Paul, in his unconverted state, if they have been kept from any gross violations of their law, they account themselves "blameless;" and if they have transgressed their law in ever so great a degree, they have no conception of any thing but their repentance and reformation to re-instate them in the Divine favour. They will indeed speak of their Messiah whom they expect, and in whom they profess a kind of confidence; but they have no definite idea of what he is to do for them, or in what way he is to recommend them to God. In a word, they know nothing of self-renunciation and reliance on him: they know nothing of their ceremonial law as completed in him, nor of their moral law as shutting them up to him: but they stand fully on their own obedience, interpreting the promises, which related only to their continuance in Canaan, as the ground on which they look for eternal life. Thus, though following after righteousness, and in some instances with considerable zeal, they neither do, nor can, attain to it, because they cleave to the law as the ground of their hopes, and make a stumbling-block of that stone, which is the only foundation on which a sinner can ever stand before God [b].]

2. The true meaning of their prophecies—

[They do not see that *chain* of prophecy, commencing with the promise of "the Seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head," and gradually proceeding through all successive ages, with ever increasing clearness and precision, till it terminated in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In this respect the Jews of later ages are blinder than their forefathers. The Jews previous to the coming of Christ did so far understand the prophecies, that they knew of what tribe the Messiah was to be born, and what was to be the place of his nativity: they knew also, that the various prophecies which were cited by our Lord and his Apostles were cited according to their true import: for we do not find them on any one occasion controverting the application of those passages

[b] Rom. ix. 31—33. & x. 2, 3.

passages to the promised Messiah. But Jews of later ages, seeing how demonstrably those passages prove the Messiahship of Jesus, have resorted to other interpretations, in order to weaken the force of the arguments with which they are pressed. Even the 53d chapter of Isaiah, which seems to defy the ingenuity of man to pervert it, is explained away by them as not relating to the Messiah. The idea of a suffering Messiah they cannot bear: and they, who are constrained to confess that such an one is indisputably predicted in the prophecies, say that they shall have two Messiahs, one a suffering, and the other a triumphant, Messiah. As for all the prophecies that determined the time for the Messiah's advent, as to be before the departure of the sceptre from Judah, and during the existence of the second temple, they get over them by saying, that God did indeed intend to send the Messiah at that time; but that he has deferred it these eighteen hundred years, and still defers it, on account of the wickedness of their nation. And the Messiah whom they expect is to be a mere temporal Prince, who shall subdue all their enemies, and make them in a temporal view the head of all nations.

Thus is there an impenetrable veil upon their hearts, as thick as that which was on the hearts of those who crucified the Lord of glory. We are told, that "their rulers at that time, not knowing the voices of the Prophets which were read every Sabbath-day, fulfilled them in condemning him[c]." Even the Apostles themselves, after that they had been instructed by their Divine Master for above three years, were still so blinded by the prejudices of their nation, that they could not admit the thought of a suffering Messiah, even when they were told of it by our Lord himself in the plainest terms[d]: yea, even after his resurrection, they still dreamed of only a temporal Messiah[e]. From them, through the tender mercy of their Lord, this veil was at length removed[f]; but on their unhappy countrymen it still remains, according to the predictions of the prophet Isaiah[g], and of the apostle Paul[h]. And it is remarkable that, at particular seasons, the Jews, not excepting children of ten or twelve years of age, at this hour wear veils in their synagogues; a sad emblem of the veil which yet remains upon their hearts!]

But let us turn from this painful subject to,

II. The manifestations that await them—

When Moses spake with the Children of Israel, he put the veil on his face; but when he went in to speak

[c] Acts xiii. 27.
[d] Luke xviii. 31—34.
[e] Luke xxiv. 21. & Acts i. 6.
[f] Luke xxiv. 25—27, 44—46.
[g] Isai. xxix. 10—13.
[h] Rom. xi. 7, 8, 25.

speak with the Lord he took off the veil[i]. Thus, while the Jews converse only with men, and will hearken to nothing but their own superstitions, the veil will remain on their hearts: but, "when once they shall turn to the Lord their God," to converse with him, and to seek instruction from him, "the veil that is on their hearts shall be taken away." So God promised them by Moses, at the very time that he foretold their present dispersion[k]; and so it shall assuredly be in due season. In this respect their conversion will differ widely from the conversion of the Heathen. The Heathen, for want of previous instruction, will have their eyes gradually opened: the removal of the veil from their heart will do no more than give them a suitable disposition to receive the great truths of Christianity, which shall be subsequently set before them: but the Jews, being previously acquainted with their own law and with the writings of their prophets, will at once behold them all as centring in the Lord Jesus: their sight will be like that of a man, who, having been long conversant with the different wheels and springs of some complicated machine, but never having had any notion of their relation to each other, and their harmonious adaptation to one common end, beholds them at once combined, and in full activity: they will have glorious views of the Gospel salvation: they will behold, with an evidence brighter than the meridian sun,

1. Its truth and certainty—

[Being already to a certain degree conversant with their types and prophecies, though ignorant as to their true import, they will, as soon as the veil is removed from their hearts, be astonished to see how every particle of them is fulfilled in Christ: and such will be their conviction of his Messiahship, that they can no more doubt of it than Paul did, after the revelation which he received in his way to Damascus. The Scriptures will then appear to them like the impression of a seal on which are engraven ten thousand figures; so clear and manifest will be the correspondence between the shadow and the substance, the type and the antitype. Their views of this

[i] Exod. xxxiv. 33, 34. [k] Deut. iv. 26, 27, 30, 31.

this will be incomparably clearer than those of Christians in general at this day: "The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord shall visit Zion, and heal the stroke of their wound."]

2. Its mysteriousness and sublimity—

[How "great will that mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," appear to them, when they shall see, that that very Jesus whom their fathers crucified, was indeed "the Lord of glory," "Jehovah's fellow," "Emmanuel, God with us!" Then they will see, that every part of their ceremonial law was fulfilled and realized in him: that he was the true Temple, "in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" the Altar, which sanctifieth all our gifts; the Sacrifice, that taketh away the sins of the whole world; the Priest, that offered that sacrifice, and is gone with his own blood within the veil, and ever liveth there to make intercession for us. Then they will see why God *repeatedly* gave that particular command to Moses, "See thou make all things according to the pattern shewn to thee in the Mount." Every the minutest point that was revealed to Moses, portrayed something in the character of Christ; so that, if any thing had been omitted, or altered, or added to it, the resemblance between the type and antitype would have failed, and God's work would have been imperfect. All the offices of Christ, as Prophet, Priest, and King, together with all that he should do in the execution of them, was there delineated: and, when the completion and concentration of them all shall be made manifest to them, with what wonder and admiration will they exclaim, "O the depths both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"]

3. Its fulness and excellency—

[The contrast in this respect will be to them most delightful: Their law was burthensome in the extreme; a yoke which they were not able to bear: but "Christ's yoke is easy, and his burthen light." Their observance of the appointed ceremonies brought them no solid peace: the very repetition of the same sacrifices shewed that their sins were not fully removed: for indeed "it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." Their sacrifices were, in fact, no more than a remembrance of sins yet unforgiven. But the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; "it purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Thus they will see, that, though "the law made nothing perfect, the bringing in of a better hope does:" "it perfects for ever all them that are sanctified." Now, the veil

veil of the temple (the body of the Lord Jesus) being rent in twain, they will find access into the holiest of all, every one for himself, and be emboldened to "cry, Abba, Father." Now they will see that they, without exception, are all Kings and Priests unto God and the Father, and are entitled to "an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and never-fading." O what joy will they experience, when they see the fulness of the provision made for them in Christ Jesus, and the freeness with which it is offered, even "without money and without price!" Truly when *they* are brought to look on him whom they have pierced, they will mourn; and when they believe in him, they will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."]

Here then we may SEE,

1. What we should seek for ourselves—

[We must not imagine that there is a veil on the heart of Jews only; for there is one on the heart of Gentiles also, even of every Child of man. Yes, we, who call ourselves Christians, are by nature blind as the Jews themselves. The veil that is upon the Mosaic dispensation, is indeed "done away in Christ [l]:" but the veil that is on our hearts is not done away: on the contrary, it is as visible upon us as upon any others of the human race. Look around and see how few are there who behold "the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ?" How few are so affected with a sight of Christ, as to be changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord [m]!" Are there not on every side myriads, who, like the Jews themselves, are looking for acceptance with God by a superstitious observance of ordinances, or, at best, by their repentance and reformation; and who have no higher views of Christ than as purchasing for them a right and title to be their own saviours? Yes, such is the state of the generality amongst us: and those who glory in the cross of Christ, and walk faithfully in his steps, are at this day "for signs and for wonders," as much as they were in the days of the prophet Isaiah [n]. In every age, and in every place they are but "a little flock," a mere "remnant," and it is only by the removal of the veil from their hearts that any become of their happy number. Whatever advantages we may enjoy, it is "not flesh and blood that can reveal Christ unto us, but only our Father that is in heaven [o]." If we have not "a spirit of wisdom and revelation given us for the enlightening of the eyes of our understanding," we shall continue in darkness, notwithstanding the true light shineth all around us [p]. The Lord must open our hearts; or they will

[l] ver. 14. [m] ver. 18. [n] Isai. viii. 18.
[o] Matt. xvi. 16, 17. [p] Eph. i. 17, 18.

will continue closed, even to our dying hour[q]. Let us seek then to have the veil removed from our hearts, that the Gospel may not be hid from us. This is a blessing which God has promised to *us*, yes, to *us* sinners of the Gentiles[r]: and, if we will turn to him, and seek him with our whole hearts, he will vouchsafe it unto us; and "bring us out of darkness into the marvellous light of his Gospel."]

2. What we should seek in behalf of our Jewish Brethren—

[The removal of this veil is all that is wanting on their behalf. But many think it in vain to labour for this end: they seem to think that nothing but a miracle can effect so great a work. But why should it be more difficult with them than with others? Are not the Gentiles as blind as ever the Jews can be? Look at the worshippers of Mahomet, of Brahma, and Confucius, and see if they are not as blind and bigoted as the Jews themselves. What were our forefathers, when first the Gospel was preached to them? Were not they as far off from God as the Jews are at this day? Yet see what has been wrought by the Gospel in this happy land. People do not despair of the conversion of the most savage tribes of Africa and America: why then should we despair of seeing "the scales fall from the eyes" of Jews? Is not God as able to graff the Jews on their own stock again, as he was to graff in us? "If we who were cut out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature, were graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more shall they who are the natural branches be graffed into their own olive-tree?" It is impious to despair; because God himself has engaged to take the veil from them, the very moment they turn unto him. Let us then exhort them to turn to him, and to look to him for that direction which alone can prove effectual. Surely this is not such a hopeless task! We may not perhaps succeed so rapidly as we could wish in the first instance: but did the prophets suspend their labours because Isaiah and Hosea had laboured so long almost in vain? Or did the Apostles decline speaking to the Jews, because their Divine Master had succeeded with so few? Let us do our duty, and leave to God to bless our endeavours as he shall see fit. If we should run in vain, as it respects the Jews, our labours shall at least "be recompensed into our own bosom," nor shall so much as a cup of cold water given them for the Lord's sake be forgotten. As for the idea that the time is not yet come; who is authorized to declare that? To whom has the Lord revealed that? A similar objection was made by those who had no mind to incur the expense and trouble of building the second temple: they could

[q] Acts xvi. 14. [r] Isai. xxv. 7. [s] Rom. xi. 23, 24.

could build cieled houses for themselves, but lay out nothing for the Lord[t]: and this is the true secret of all such objections at this day: they are only so many excuses to veil our own want of faith and love. Let us arise and build without delay; and God will be with us. We have never yet tried to take the veil from their hearts: or the exertions that have been made in our own strength. Now there is a way adopted, which, we hope and trust, God will make effectual for the conversion of many; I mean, the giving to them the New Testament in their own language. This, in concurrence with the other means that are using, will, we hope, be the means of removing the veil from the hearts of many, and of hasting forward the happy day, when the "Children of Israel shall return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king[u];" and so "all Israel shall be saved[x]."

And here let me observe, that to impart to them the light which we ourselves have received, is a duty of the first importance, because it has been committed to us for the express purpose of communicating it to them; God having especially ordained, that "through our mercy (or the mercy vouchsafed to us) *they* (the unbelieving Jews) may obtain mercy[y]." Now, what should we say of any person to whom the care of a lighthouse had been committed, if, through his neglect to exhibit the light, a whole fleet should suffer shipwreck, and a thousand mariners be drowned? would not the whole nation charge him with the guilt of their destruction, yes, and visit him too with condign punishment for his offence? Yet *he* would be innocent in comparison of us, who have been accessary not to the loss of the bodily life of a thousand, but with the eternal perdition of millions, in that we have neglected to set before them that light by which alone they could be saved. O let us not blame the Jews for the veil that is upon their hearts, but cast the blame where it is more justly due—on the Christian world, who have used no efforts to rend it from them, and to give them the light of life. And, as our neglect has been of long continuance, let us now exert ourselves with an energy that shall at once evince the depth of our repentance for our neglect of them, and the sincerity of our gratitude for the mercies vouchsafed to us.]

[t] Haggai i. 2—4. [u] Hos. iii. 5. [x] Rom. xi. 26. [y] Lib. 31.

DCCCCLXXXVI.

THE CONTEST BETWEEN GOD AND SATAN.

2 Cor. iv. 4—6. *The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of*

of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them: for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake: for God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

THE office of the Ministry, if conscientiously discharged, is the most honourable and useful that a human Being can execute: but, if perverted to carnal ends and purposes, it debases a man's character, and renders him more injurious to society than a raging pestilence. A Minister, if he be upright before God, will not seek his own honour or interest, but the salvation of his people: he will be the servant of men for Christ's sake: he will employ all his time and talents in the line of his own peculiar profession; and will gladly sacrifice, not his reputation only or his interests, but his very life, if need be, in the service of his fellow-creatures: feeling the importance of his work, he will never degrade the pulpit by making it a theatre whereon to display his own abilities, but will commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and exert himself to the utmost to rescue sinners from the jaws of the devouring lion. St. Paul, in the passage before us, labours to impress this thought on our minds. Speaking of the blindness of men, not only under the law, but even under the clearer light of the Gospel, and having ascribed it to the agency of Satan, he affirms, that his one employment as a Minister was, to co-operate with God in defeating the purposes of that wicked fiend.—Not content with having declared this sentiment in the verses preceding the text, he interrupts, as it were, the thread of his discourse, to repeat it; intimating thereby, that as he could not repeat it too often, so they who should follow him in the Ministerial office could never dwell upon it too much; "We preach not ourselves," says he, "but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

It is however to the other parts of the text that we

we wish to draw your attention at this time: they exhibit in a contrasted view,

I. The great Powers that interest themselves about the souls of men—

Satan is more earnestly occupied respecting us than we are aware of—

[The Power here called "the god of this world" is most assuredly the Devil: his character is put in direct opposition to that of Jehovah; and therefore, however august the title may appear, it must be understood in reference to him, who has shewn himself from the beginning the great enemy both of God and man. He is called the god of this world, because the whole world lies under his dominion.—Not that he is the rightful Governor; he is a vile Usurper, that has reduced our fallen race under his power, and exercises over them the most despotic sway.—Repeatedly is he called by Christ himself, "the Prince of this world;" and by the Apostle, "the Prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." It is by blinding their minds that he retains his power, and makes them account *that* liberty, which is, in fact, the sorest bondage. Is it asked, *How* does he blind their minds? We answer, He has a multitude of devices, which cannot be discovered without much deep experience, and much divine instruction—He puffs us up with a conceit that we know enough already; and thereby keeps us from seeking information—He stimulates us to the gratification of our corrupt propensities, that we may have neither leisure nor inclination to attend to our spiritual concerns—He fills us with prejudice against the doctrines of the Gospel as erroneous, and against the Ministers and people of God as hypocrites or enthusiasts; and thus confirms us in our natural enmity against God himself—Sometimes he represents God as too merciful to punish; and, at other times, as too inexorable to forgive: and thus either lulls us asleep in security, or enervates us by despondency—By these and other wiles too numerous to recount, he keeps men in his snares, and "leads them captive at his will."]

Jehovah also condescends to interest himself in our behalf—

[The God of heaven is here opposed to the God of this world; and is described by an expression of his omnipotence no less wonderful than the Creation of the Universe out of nothing; "he commanded the light to shine out of darkness."

While

While Satan is endeavouring to blind men, Jehovah exerts himself to enlighten their minds—He could indeed effect his purpose in an instant; but he is pleased to make use of means, and to form his new creation in a gradual manner—He sends his Ministers to declare his truth, and his Spirit to seal it on our hearts—Thus, by fixing our attention to it, by making us to see its correspondence with our experience and our wants, and, finally, by giving us to taste its sweetness and excellency, he shines into our hearts, and dissipates the darkness wherein we were enveloped.]

The contrasted representation of these great Powers exhibits to us also,

II. The ends and purposes they are endeavouring to accomplish—

Satan strives as much as possible to hide Christ from our eyes—

[Satan is aware that no one, who has a discovery of Christ's glory, will ever continue submissive to his government—Let a soul be favoured with a ray from heaven, whereby it shall have a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus, and it will instantly cast off its allegiance to Satan, and take up arms against him—But, while the veil continues on the heart, and this heavenly light is concealed from the view, the soul will be satisfied with its state, nor ever exert itself in earnest to break the yoke imposed upon it—This therefore it is the great work of Satan to accomplish: he cares not what we know or what we do, if he can but keep us from beholding the Divine image in the face of Jesus—As every thing short of this will be ineffectual for our salvation, so he is willing that we should have every attainment in knowledge or morality, if he can but succeed in this one point—This is the very marrow of the Gospel, if we may so speak: it is that which infuses life into the dry bones: in vain will each kindred bone resume its proper station in the body: in vain will the flesh and sinews be superinduced upon them; the body will be no other than a breathless corpse, till a spirit of life be infused into it[a]: so will the soul, however exactly fashioned as to the outward appearance, be altogether destitute of spiritual life, till Christ be revealed to it, and formed within it—While "the Gospel is hid from the soul, it is, and must be, lost."]

God, on the other hand, strives to reveal Christ unto him—

[He

[a] Ezek. xxxvii. 7—9.

[He knows that nothing short of a discovery of Christ will ever save the soul—If we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, if we have faith that can remove mountains, if we give all our goods to feed the poor, and our body to be burned, and have not that view of Christ which fills our souls with love to God and man, it profiteth us nothing[b]—Not even a knowledge of Christ himself will be of any effectual service, if we do not see the divine perfections uniting in him, and glorified in the Redemption which he has wrought out for us—Hence, in every dispensation, whether of providence or of grace, he aims at leading sinners to the perfect knowledge of *his* Son—Nor can he ever look upon them with pleasure and complacency till this be accomplished.]

This subject will clearly shew us,

1. The value of our souls—

[Shall two such great Powers interest themselves so much about us, and we imagine that our souls are of little worth? Surely that which incessantly occupies *their* attention must well deserve our incessant care ———]

2. Our state before God—

[Let us not ask ourselves merely whether we be moral or immoral, but whether the scales have ever fallen from our eyes, and the glory of Christ been ever revealed to our souls? —We must be made sensible that Satan once blinded us; that through his influence we were in unbelief; that nothing but a light from heaven could dispel this darkness; and that such a revelation of Christ to the soul is the only possible source of life and salvation. Let us inquire whether we have ever felt that conviction, and whether, under the influence of it, we have *sought* and *obtained* that divine illumination? This is the criterion by which we must judge ourselves, and by which our state will be determined to all eternity.]

3. The constant duty of our lives—

[Though we are not to neglect our earthly calling, we must seek above all to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ"—Even after we have been enlightened, we need be careful lest Satan blind us again and again[c]—We should seek continually the illumination of God's Spirit, and, by increasing views of Christ's glory, to be changed into his image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord[d].]

[b] 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3.

[c] The falls of David, Solomon, and others, should put us on our guard.

[d] If this were the subject of a *Visitation* or *Ordination* Sermon, it would be proper to shew in this place the Duty of Ministers to "preach Christ," and to "know nothing but Christ," in all their Ministrations; since nothing but that will save the souls of those to whom they minister.

DCCCCLXXXVII.

THE TRIALS OF CHRISTIANS THE MEANS OF MAGNIFYING THEIR LORD.

2 Cor. iv. 11. *We who live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*

THAT the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, was the Creator of all things, is readily acknowledged: nor will the assertion, that "without him was not any thing made that was made," be for a moment disputed by any one who believes the Scriptures: but when the same expressions are used in reference to the events of daily occurrence, they gain not the same easy access to our minds: yet it is true in reference to all the works both of providence and grace, that "without him is not any thing done that is done:" all the evil that is done, is done by his permission; and all the good, by his agency. To direct the attention of men to him as the Sovereign Disposer of all events, is the continual aim of the sacred writers, who teach us to regard him as "upholding all things by his own power," and overruling them for his own glory. One reason for his committing the ministration of his Gospel to a few poor fishermen was, that the enriching of the world with its treasures might not be ascribed to human wisdom, but altogether to the Divine Power[a]. For the same reason did he leave these "earthen vessels" to be treated in such a way as almost to preclude a hope of any long continuance of their ministrations: it was, to give the most decisive evidence to the world, that HE reigned on high, and by his almighty power preserved them, till they had finished the work which he had given them to do.

St. Paul, maintaining the authority of his Apostleship against those who disputed it, shews, that, whilst the trials to which he was exposed appeared to render his Divine Mission questionable, the supports and consolations that were afforded him placed it beyond a doubt; yea, both the afflictions and consolations

[a] ver. 7.

solations were sent *on purpose* that the almighty power and continual agency of the Lord Jesus Christ might be the more conspicuously seen, and more universally acknowledged. *Twice is this declared* in the short space of two verses[b]; and it is a truth that demands from us the most attentive consideration. But that we may take the subject in the connexion in which it stands, we shall shew,

I. What was the state of the first Christians—

Perhaps the Apostle primarily refers to himself and his fellow Apostles—

[Their trials were beyond all conception great. Whilst their Divine Master continued upon earth, they were screened from persecution[c]: but when he was removed, they stood in the fore-front of the battle. At the very commencement of their work, they were all imprisoned, and beaten for their Lord's sake[d]: and from that time they were treated with all imaginable contempt and cruelty. St. Paul, in this very Epistle, enumerates such a catalogue of sufferings as would have broken the spirit of any man who was not miraculously strengthened by Divine grace: "He was in labours more abundant than any other Apostle, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews, he five times received nine-and-thirty stripes; (forty being the utmost that the Jewish Magistrates were authorized to inflict on any criminal;) thrice was he beaten with rods; once was he stoned; thrice he suffered shipwreck; a night and a day he was (on some piece of a wreck) in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the Heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness[e]." Now though he had a greater measure of these trials than others, they were to a very great extent the common lot of all: for it is not of himself only, but of all, that he speaks in another place, saying, "I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place: we are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things unto this day[f]." Every one of them might with truth make the same solemn assertion as St.

[b] ver. 10. [c] John vii. 7. [d] Acts iv. 3. & v. 18, 40.
[e] 2 Cor. xi. 23—27. [f] 1 Cor. iv. 9, 11, 13.

St. Paul did, "I protest by my rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus my Lord, I die daily[g]."]

But the whole Church were in fact exposed to the heaviest trials—

[Stephen, being distinguished by his gifts and graces, speedily fell a victim to the people's rage: and his death was a signal for a general persecution against the whole Church: and so bitter was this persecution, "that the people were scattered abroad through all the regions of Judea and Samaria, none daring to continue at Jerusalem, except the Apostles[h]." They had been taught from the beginning to expect this: they had been told, that, "if they would be Christ's Disciples, they must take up their cross daily," and "forsake all," and follow him. The saints of former days had been called to suffer like things[i]; and the same path was now prescribed to all the followers of Christ: "they must bear about in their body the dying of the Lord Jesus[k]," and "through much tribulation must enter into the kingdom of heaven." By "bearing about in their body the dying of the Lord Jesus," I understand the being subjected to the same trials as the Lord Jesus Christ himself endured when on earth: and this was, more or less, the appointed portion of all the early Christians: the same description of people who hated him, and persecuted him, hated and persecuted all who resembled him, and all who honoured him: "they had called the Master of the house, Beelzebub;" and by the same ignominious name did they designate "those of his household." In a word, so vehement and universal was the hatred against the very name of Christ, that the mere profession of faith in him was esteemed a sufficient ground for imprisonment and death: so that the prediction of David respecting them was fully verified, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter[l]."]

How greatly we are interested in their history will appear, whilst we consider,

II. The instruction to be derived from it—

The reflections which most powerfully suggest themselves to our minds, are,

1. How worthy is the Lord Jesus Christ to be loved and served!

[Every convert was taught beforehand what he was to expect: yet, in the face of all these dangers, millions embraced, and

[g] 1 Cor. xv. 31. [h] Acts viii. 1. [i] Heb. xi. 35—38.
[k] ver. 10. [l] Ps. xliv. 22.

and openly professed, the faith of Christ: and as fast as one set of Christians sealed the truth with their blood, others came forward to confess the same Lord, and, "were baptized in the room of the dead[m]," like soldiers instantly springing forward to occupy the ranks which the devouring sword had thinned. So far were they from being intimidated, they were rather emboldened, by all that they saw and heard: if they fled from the sword of persecution, they availed themselves of the opportunity which their flight afforded them, to preach the Gospel throughout all the Roman empire[n], and "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake." The example of the apostle Paul, though transcendently eminent in these respects, may serve to shew us what was the general feeling of the whole Church. Though his afflictions were so numerous and heavy, yet "none of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear unto him, so that he might but finish his course with joy." He was "willing not only to be bound, but also to die, at any time, and in any manner, for the Lord Jesus."

Now in this way did the primitive saints shew their regard for Christ: when informed what sacrifices they should be called to make for him, they counted the cost; and considered the pearl cheaply purchased at the price of all that they possessed[o].

And is this pearl sunk in value? Does not the Lord Jesus Christ deserve as much at our hands as he did at theirs? Yes; it is in this way that we must all receive him: we must "account all things but loss and dung, that we may win him:" and "if we hate not father and mother, and even our own lives also in comparison of him, we cannot be his disciples." Inquire, Brethren, whether you have ever come to Christ in this way? whether you have ever had such exalted views of his excellency, as to determine you to know nothing, and value nothing, but him? and whether you have felt such a deep sense of your obligations to him as to "glory in the cross for his sake," and to make even the most cruel death for his sake a subject of congratulation and joy, rather than of sorrow and condolence[p]? When such are our views of Christ, and such the dispositions of our minds towards him, then, and then only, have we any scriptural evidence that we belong to him.]

2. What rich provision we have in Christ!

[If we are Christ's, we must expect "fiery trials to try us;" for "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." But "if our afflictions abound for his sake, he will make our consolations to abound also." In this respect the

[m] 1 Cor. xv. 29.
[n] Acts viii. 4.
[o] Matt. xiii. 46.
[p] Phil. ii. 17.

the Apostle's experience shall be realized in us: like him, we may be greatly tried; but, "though troubled on every side, we shall not be so *straitened*," as to have no way to escape: we may be so "perplexed," as not to know what to do; but "we shall not be left to despair," as though we had none at hand that was able to help or deliver. We may be "persecuted" by the whole human race; yet shall we "not be forsaken" by our God: we may be "cast down," and apparently vanquished, for a season; but we shall "not ultimately be destroyed." This is expressly promised to every Member of the Church of Christ. "He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation make also a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it[q]:" and in the full confidence of this we may exult as the Apostle did, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (as it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter:) nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us[r]." Our extremities may be such as almost to destroy all hope: but they shall be the seasons of his effectual interposition. "In the Mount he shall be seen" by us, just as he was by Abraham[s]: "when he sees that our power is gone, and that there is none shut up or left" to assist us, "then will he repent himself for us, and interpose for our relief[t]:" and "when we are cast down, then shall we say, There is lifting up: for God will save the humble person[u]."

Beloved Brethren, know what provision there is for you in this adorable Saviour: and, whilst you reflect on "the help which is thus laid up for you on One that is mighty," learn to confide in him, and to say, "If God be for me, who can be against me?" "If my God and Saviour be on my side, I will not fear what either men or devils can do against me."]

3. How thankful we should be that we are permitted to serve Christ on such easy terms!

[Though we must all have some cross to bear, yet our trials are nothing in comparison of those that were endured by the primitive Church. The worst that we are called to sustain is, a sneer, an opprobious name, or some trivial loss. How light would the first Christians have accounted such petty sufferings as these! Yet even by these are many amongst us so intimidated, that they dare not to confess Christ openly. What then would such persons do, if the sword of persecution were drawn against them now, as in former

[q] 1 Cor. x. 13. [r] Rom. viii. 35—37. [s] Gen. xxii. 14.
[t] Deut. xxxii. 36. [u] Job xxii. 29.

former days, or as at the time of the Reformation in our own land, when so many were burnt alive for the Gospel's sake? Well may we be thankful that such trials of our faith as these no longer exist: for, if such a sifting time were to arise, many, very many, amongst us, it is to be feared, would be found no better than chaff[x]: many who now look gay, "receiving the word with joy, would on the rising of temptation and persecution presently fall away[y], and make shipwreck of their faith." Let us all then be thankful for the rest we enjoy; and improve it for our more abundant edification in faith and love[z]; that, if God should see fit again to loose the chain by which our great adversary is bound, we may "be able to resist in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand."]

4. What under all circumstances should be our main concern—

[The end for which such grievous persecutions were permitted to harass the primitive Church was, that Christ's power and grace might be visibly seen in those who were called to endure them: and this very consideration made St. Paul to "take pleasure in all his distresses," because he knew, that the power of Christ would rest upon him, and "be perfected in his weakness[a]." In like manner should we also rise superior to the concerns of time and sense, and be anxious only, "that Christ may be glorified in our body, whether by life or death[b]." He is now seated at the right hand of God, and possesses "all power both in heaven and earth." In him is treasured up all fulness for the use of his Church, that out of it all his members may receive according to their several necessities. He is their life[c]; and "they live by him, exactly as he, when on earth, lived by his Father[d]," with whom he was altogether one[e]. In all his miracles the finger of God appeared, because they were wrought by God: so in all the exercises of our spiritual life Christ is seen: because it is only by strength communicated from him, that we can either do, or suffer, as we ought[f]. Let this then be our endeavour, namely, so to live, as to carry conviction to all who see us, that we are under the guidance and care of an all-wise, almighty Being. Let our every act, as it were, shew, not only how Christ lived on earth, but that he now lives, and rules, in heaven; and that he is still as present with his people by his Spirit, as ever his own Father was present with him in the days of his flesh. This is an object worthy the ambition of the first Archangel; yet is it attainable by all of us, if only we will "live by faith on Christ," and "cleave unto him with full purpose of heart."]

[x] Am. ix. 9. [y] Matt. xiii. 20, 21. [z] Acts ix. 31.
[a] 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. [b] Phil. i. 20. [c] Col. iii. 4.
[d] John vi. 56, 57. [e] John x. 30. [f] Phil. iv 13

DCCCCLXXXVIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ASSURED PROSPECT OF GLORY.

2 Cor. v. 1—5. *We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burthened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God; who also hath given unto us the earnest of his Spirit.*

IT has justly been said of Christians, that if in this life only they had life, they would be of all men in the most pitiable condition; seeing that they renounce all the pleasures of sin, and are exposed to all manner of trials for their Lord's sake. And certainly, if we consider the variety and greatness of St. Paul's sufferings, this may be applied to him with more propriety than to any other of the children of men. But, notwithstanding he was "delivered daily unto death for Jesus' sake, he was still cheerful and still happy: and, notwithstanding "his outward man decayed, his inward man was renewed day by day." Do we seek the cause of this? he had his eye fixed on eternal things, and derived from thence a fund of consolation sufficient to bear him up above all his afflictions. Death had no terrors for him; because "he knew that, when his earthly tabernacle should be dissolved, he had a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

But, as this experience was not confined to him, we shall take occasion from the words which we have read to shew,

I. The Christian's experience in the prospect of the eternal world—

He knows that there is a glorious mansion prepared for him—

[Here he dwells in a poor frail "tabernacle," like the Patriarchs

Patriarchs of old[a], exposed to vicissitudes of every kind, and uncertain how soon he may be called to change his precarious abode. But he has a better tabernacle prepared for him, a house more glorious in its structure, and more lasting in its duration, even "a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Nor is his speedy enjoyment of this house a matter of conjecture with him, nor even of hope; it is a certainty, of which he is assured: he "knows" that such a tabernacle is prepared, prepared for him too; and that, "as soon as his earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved," he shall instantly be translated to it. It is the inheritance to which he has been born; and which is therefore "reserved for him," as he also is for it; the very power which made it for him being pledged to put him into the possession of it[b]. To it the Patriarchs looked forward as the certain termination of their earthly pilgrimage[c]: and with still greater certainty does the Christian look forward to it, as being at this instant occupied by his forerunner, the Lord Jesus Christ, "who is gone before to prepare it for him, and is coming speedily to remove him to it[d]." Like Job, he can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and mine eyes shall behold him[e]; and with the same blessed assurance also he can add, "I shall be with him, and be like him," for ever and ever[f].]

In the prospect of this he longs for the period of his dissolution—

[In his present tabernacle he is laden with grievous corruptions, and beset with manifold temptations, and exposed to injuries on every side: and, from "his fightings without, and fears within," his time is often spent in sighs and groans. Many, many times does he exclaim with St. Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Notwithstanding "he has within himself the first-fruits of the Spirit, he groans within himself, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body[g]." *Twice* is this mentioned in our text, to certify us the more fully, that groans are the common language of the heaven-born soul; and that it is in that language more especially that "the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us[h]."

"To be delivered from the bondage of corruption," is certainly one great object which the Christian panteth after: but he also longs, and "earnestly desires," to be brought "into the glorious liberty of the children of God[i]." He knows that "when unclothed, as it respects his present tabernacle, he

[a] Heb. xi. 9. [b] 1 Pet. i. 3—5. [c] Heb. xi. 10.
[d] John xiv. 2, 3. [e] Job xix. 25—27. [f] 1 John iii. 2.
[g] Rom. viii. 23. [h] Rom. viii. 26. [i] Rom. viii. 21.

he shall not be found naked" and destitute, seeing that a better habitation is ready for him; and it is his desire after this better habitation, that chiefly actuates him in his longings for the dissolution of his earthly tabernacle. It is "not merely to be unclothed," and to get rid of his present troubles, but "to be clothed upon with his house from heaven," and have "mortality swallowed up of life." It is no disparagement to a godly soul to say, "Oh that I had wings like a dove[k]! for then would I flee away and be at rest:" but it is a higher attainment to say, "I long to be dissolved, *that I may be with Christ*[l]."

We are ready to imagine that there is a confusion of metaphor in this place, and that "to be clothed upon with a house," is an absurd expression: but, if we advert to the circumstance, that that house is "a tabernacle," and that a tabernacle is constructed with an awning or covering cast over it, the propriety, and indeed the beauty, of the expression will appear at once. And when it is considered that even the tabernacle of the Most High was not so far superior to the accommodation of the meanest Israelite, as the Mansions prepared for us are above the tabernacle in which we now live, we shall not wonder, that the soul of the Believer sighs and groans for his blest abode; his abode, the residence of angels, the habitation of his God. It was this consideration that made Paul so satisfied in the near prospect of martyrdom: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand: but there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me[m]." It was the same, that rendered Peter also equally composed in the near approach of crucifixion. He designates even that cruel death by the gentle term of "putting off this tabernacle;" to which he was reconciled by the thought that an infinitely better mansion awaited him at his departure hence[n]. But is it for Apostles only to enjoy this sweet assurance? Are they alone authorized to look forward with delight to the eternal world? No: this is the privilege of every saint. Heaven is the Believer's *home:* whilst he is here, he is a *sojourner,* in a state of *exile* from his Lord: and when he goes hence, he ceases from his pilgrimage, and goes *home* to the bosom of his God[o]. If we are "walking by faith and not by sight," that is, if we are true Believers, this is our present portion, and "our eternal great reward."]

But, whilst we assert that this is the Christian's experience, it will be proper to shew,

II. How

[k] Ps. lv. 6. [l] Phil. i. 21—23. [m] 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.
[n] 2 Pet. i. 13, 14. [o] ver. 6, 8. See the Greek.

II. How he attains to it—

It is wrought in him by his God—

[Man cannot work it in himself. Man may desire to get rid of his present trials, and in a fit of impatience may "choose strangling rather than life:" indeed it is but too common for those who are bowed down with a load of wordly troubles, to seek relief in suicide. But this is very different from the experience in our text, a principal ingredient in which is a desire after the glory and felicity of heaven. This no man can produce in his own soul. Man, of himself, has no conception of that blessedness, nor any taste for the enjoyment of it; much less has he such a view of it as will incline him to brave the most cruel death for the attainment of it. He who alone can work this in the soul of man, is God. He alone, who opened the eyes of Stephen to behold God, and Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God, can give to any man a just apprehension of the heavenly glory, together with an assurance of his title to it, and his interest in it. He alone, who raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead, can so deliver us from the fear of death, that it shall appear to us a desirable acquisition. He alone, who has enabled us to say, "To me to live is Christ," can enable us to add, "To me also it is gain to die."

How God works this in the soul, it is not easy to state. We are but little acquainted with the workings of our own spirit, and still less with the operations of the Spirit of God. We know little of wind, but by its effects: as to the mode of its operation, we have but very indistinct notions about it: it is no wonder therefore that there should be many things relative to the operation of the Holy Spirit on our souls which we are not able clearly to define. But from the effects produced by him, we do assuredly collect his agency: and where we see an ardent desire after the heavenly glory, we do not hesitate to affirm, that the Author of it is God; since none but He, who created the universe out of nothing, can create so blessed a disposition in the soul. This disposition is called "the earnest of the Spirit," which God gives to his believing people. Now an earnest is, not merely a pledge of any thing, but a part of the thing itself, given as a pledge that the remainder shall be imparted in due time: and hence that which is called in our text "the earnest of the Spirit," is in another place called "an earnest of our inheritance[p];" which being given to the soul by God, is to that soul a ground of the strongest assurance that the promised blessing shall in due time be communicated in all its fulness.]

It

[p] Eph. i. 14.

It shall be wrought in all who heartily desire it—

[One of the most important lessons which the Gospel teaches us, is, that we should be ever "looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ[q]." We should not only be looking for it, but "hasting unto it," even "to the coming of the day of Christ[r]:" and the character given to all Christians is, that they do thus "love his appearing[s]." But, if we have not a well grounded hope of glory, how can we delight ourselves in the prospect of that day? It is our taste of the grapes of Eshcol that assures to us the full enjoyment of the Promised Land: and it is our partial entrance on our rest in this world, that assures to us the complete possession of "the rest that remaineth for us[t]." Let us therefore seek the first-fruits, and we need entertain no fears respecting the full harvest.]

From hence we may LEARN,

1. How desirable it is to have the evidences of our conversion clear—

[Though the earnest of the Spirit is itself both a seal and evidence of our conversion, it must not be found alone; much less must it be supposed to exist, where any habitual or allowed sin attests the contrary. The witness of the Spirit is in perfect harmony with the written word: and though it may for wise and gracious reasons be withheld from a person who is walking uprightly before God; (for a man may "fear the Lord, and yet walk in darkness and have no light[u];") yet it never is vouchsafed to any one who is not serving God in sincerity and truth: and the man who imagines that he has the earnest of the Spirit, and the witness of the Spirit, whilst yet he is not unfeignedly and unreservedly devoted unto God, deceiveth his own soul. Some imagine that to speak of evidences is to encourage legality: but it is impossible to read the Epistles of St. John, and not to see, that he lays down, I had almost said, a system of evidences, whereby a man should try his state before God. Feelings, however strong, and whatever confidence they may generate in the soul, cannot be depended on, if separated from the dispositions and actions produced by them: and therefore I cannot but earnestly recommend every one to examine carefully the state of his own soul, lest he dream of heaven and awake in hell."]

2. How light all trials should be to the believing soul—

[Well

[q] Tit. ii. 11—13. [r] 2 Pet. iii. 12. [s] 2 Tim. iv. 8.
[t] Heb. iv. 3, 9. [u] Isai. l. 10.

[Well does the Apostle in the words before our text call them "light and momentary;" so light, as to be "lightness" itself[x]. Of what moment are the accommodations of an inn, where the traveller stops an hour in his journey to his father's house? Such travellers are we; and the period of our stay is at the utmost an hour, or rather, the twinkling of an eye. I may ask too, of what moment are his little inconveniences there, in comparison of the great and permanent felicity that awaits him? This is the true way to estimate our sufferings, of whatever kind they be[y]. You who are most tried, fix your eyes upon the glory that shall be revealed: think of "the grace that shall be given you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Think especially too of your trials as loosening the pins of your present tabernacle, and hastening forward your entrance into that tabernacle that is prepared for you: view them, I say, in this light, and you will be so far from complaining of them, that you will rejoice and glory in them as the wise appointments of a gracious God: and "the trial of your faith will be precious, because it will be found to his praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ[z]."]

3. How blessed is the portion of every Child of God—

[Inconvenient as his present abode is, and painful as his state at present is in some respects, he yet is truly blessed. Consider what prospects he enjoys, yea, what anticipations and foretastes of his future bliss: for by faith he has already as clear evidence of the future glory, as if he saw it with his bodily eyes; and as truly the substance of it, as if he had it already in his possession[a]. Tell me not of his trials; for I say, he is a truly blessed man: and our blessed Lord again and again declares him blessed[b]. Then think of his state as soon as this earthly tabernacle is dissolved; think of him as clothed upon with his house from heaven, and mortality, with all its attendant pains, "as swallowed up of life." Not an atom of his former troubles or weaknesses remains; all is *swallowed up*, and is as if it had never been. Read the account of him as dwelling in the tabernacle of his God, and you will break forth into the most heart-felt congratulations, "Happy art thou, O Israel, O people saved by the Lord[d]!"]

[x] Ch. iv. 17. See the Greek.
[y] Rom. viii. 18.
[z] 1 Pet. i. 7.
[a] Heb. xi. 1.
[b] Matt. v. 11, 12.
[c] Rev. xxi. 3, 4.
[d] Deut. xxxiii. 29.

DCCCCLXXXIX.

THE CHRISTIAN WALKING BY FAITH.

2 Cor. v. 7. *We walk by faith, not by sight.*

IF we behold any wonderful effects, we naturally inquire after the cause that has produced them. Now in the preceding context we behold as extraordinary a phenomenon as can be conceived: a sinner, like ourselves, not only divested of all fear of death, but longing after it as the consummation of all his hopes, and the completion of all his desires. This is a frame of mind totally unknown to man by nature, and incapable of being produced by any natural means. How then was it produced in the apostle Paul? He tells us, "He that hath wrought us to the self-same thing, is God." But how did God work it? for it is certain that he works by means. I answer, By forming in his soul a principle of faith, and making that the great moving cause of all his actions: This is the account which St. Paul himself gives us in the words before us: "We are willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight[a]." It was by faith that he attained this blessed state: and if, like him, we cultivate that heavenly principle, and take it as the spring and source of all our conduct, we shall find it productive of similar blessedness in our souls. It is, in truth, this principle, which above all others distinguishes the true Christian from every other person under heaven.

To explain and vindicate his conduct in reference to this matter, we will shew,

I. The principle by which the Christian is actuated—

He fixes his eye, not on things visible and temporal, but on things invisible and eternal—

[This is declared at the close of the preceding chapter[b]; and the same contrast is marked in our text. Faith is opposed to sight, and has respect entirely to things which are beyond

[a] Compare the text with the preceding and following verses.
[b] Ch. iv. 18.

beyond the reach of mortal eyes. It looks upon an unseen God; even as Moses did, who feared not the wrath of Pharaoh, because "he saw him that is invisible[c]." This great and adorable Being it beholds, and contemplates all his glorious perfections. It sees all his mind and will in the book of Revelation: it recognizes his superintending providence in all events: it regards him as inspecting continually the most hidden recesses of our souls, and noting every thing in the book of his remembrance in order to a future judgment.

Faith also views an unseen Saviour as the supreme object of his people's love, and the only foundation of all their hopes[d]. It beholds him dying for their sins, and rising again for their justification: yea, it sees him interceding for them at the right hand of God, and preserving for them that peace which by their sins and infirmities they would soon forfeit. It enters into the whole of the Saviour's work and offices, surveying them in all their extent and variety; and particularly regards him as the fountain of life to all his people; as having in himself all fulness of spiritual blessings treasured up for them, and imparting to them continually out of that fulness according to their several necessities.

Faith views an unseen heaven also. It soars and penetrates into the very Paradise of God, and surveys the crowns and kingdoms which God has there prepared for all that love him. There it beholds that glorious tabernacle which the soul shall inhabit as soon as this earthly house shall be dissolved: and in the promises recorded in the written word, it sees the possession of that glory assured to every believing soul, assured by an everlasting covenant, and by the oath of a "God that cannot lie."

Such are the objects of faith! and such the objects on which the Christian's eye is continually fixed!]

By these he regulates the whole of his life and conversation—

[These are the things which draw forth his regards; and in comparison of these all earthly things are but as dung and dross. For these he sighs, and groans, and weeps, and strives: to obtain an interest in them is more to him than ten thousand worlds. Whatever will endanger the loss of these, he flees from, as from the face of a serpent: and whatever has a tendency to secure his interest in them, he labours incessantly to perform. In these all his affections center: his hopes and fears, his joys and sorrows, all terminate in these: and, in exact proportion as he is enabled by faith to realize and apprehend these, he is happy. In a word, "he walks

[c] Heb. xi. 27. [d] 1 Pet. i. 8.

walks by faith:" and every step he takes is under the influence of that principle. Faith is to the Christian what the compass is to the mariner in the trackless ocean: under all circumstances he consults its testimony, and follows its directions: and, in so doing, he fears not but that in due time he shall arrive at his destined haven.

This was the charater of the apostle Paul; and it is the character of every true Christian under heaven: "the life which he now lives in the flesh, he lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him*?"]

But as to those who understand not his views he appears to act absurdly, we will proceed to mark—

II. The reasonableness of his conduct in this respect—

Doubtless the people who are strangers to this principle must "gaze strangely at" the Christian, and account him almost mad. The overlooking with comparative contempt all that he has ever seen, and following with all possible ardor things which no mortal eye ever did see, must appear the height of folly and enthusiasm; and we wonder not if many should say to him, "Thou art beside thyself; much thoughtfulness hath made thee mad." But we reply, that there is no comparison between the wisdom of walking by faith or being actuated by sight.

The principle of faith is,

1. More exalted in its objects—

[The objects of sense are all poor, and mean, and worthless. Take all that eye ever saw, or ear heard, or heart conceived; and it would not weigh against one glimpse of the Saviour's glory, or one taste of his love. Besides, it is all transient and of very short duration. But think of Almighty God and his covenant of grace; think of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all the wonders of redeeming love; think of heaven, and all its glory and blessedness; and then say, which are most deserving of our regard? In attaching ourselves to the one, we degrade ourselves to the state of unenlightened Heathens, I had almost said, of the brute beasts; but by living wholly with a reference to the latter, we emulate, as it were, the glorified saints and angels. The one is as high above the other, as the heavens are above the earth.]

2. More certain in its testimony—

[Earthly

* Gal. ii. 20.

[Earthly things may dazzle us with their glare and glitter: but they are all a lie, a cheat, a shadow, a delusion: there is no substance in them. With whatever confidence we press forward for the attainment of them, the more they disappoint our endeavours: and, when we think we have secured the prize, we no sooner stretch out our hands to lay hold on it, than it eludes our grasp: or, if we apprehend the object of our desires, it proves to us no better than vanity and vexation of spirit. But was ever any one deceived in apprehending the realities of the eternal world? Did ever any one who sought them by faith, fail in the pursuit of them, or find them, when attained, below his expectation? No truly: it is justly said by the Lord Jesus Christ under the character of wisdom, "I cause them that love me to inherit substance [f]:" and every promise that makes over these things to the believing soul, is as immutable as God himself.]

3. More excellent in its operations—

[The tendency of visible things is to sensualize and debase the soul: but the effect of heavenly things is to purify and exalt it. The more we contemplate the Divine Being, the more shall we be transformed into his blessed image. The more we exercise faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, the more will grace, and mercy, and peace be multiplied unto us. The more we breathe the atmosphere of heaven, the more shall we be fitted for the everlasting enjoyment of it. "Every man that has such hopes in him, purifieth himself even as God is pure [g]:" and the very promises by which he apprehends them, lead him to "cleanse himself from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God [h]." Truly "by these he becomes a partaker of the divine nature [i]," and is progressively "changed into the divine image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of our God [k]."]

4. More conducive to our true happiness—

[What does he possess who has the whole world at his command? A mere phantom: and, if he look for any solid happiness from it, he will find, that he has only "filled his belly with the east wind." But who can describe the happiness of him, who, by faith, has already in his soul "the substance of things hoped for, as well as the evidence of things not seen [l]?" Who can declare the blessedness of him, who has God for his Father, Christ for his Saviour, the Holy Spirit for his Comforter, and Heaven for his home? This man lives on "angels' food." He has grapes of Eshcol already by

[f] Prov. viii. 21. [g] 1 John iii. 3. [h] 2 Cor. vii. 1.
[i] 2 Pet. i. 4. [k] 2 Cor. iii. 18. [l] Heb. xi. 1.

by the way: he stands on Pisgah's top, surveying in all its length and breadth the Land of Promise: he has already an earnest and foretaste of the heavenly bliss: and, when he goes hence, he will change neither his company nor his employment: he is already dwelling in, and with, his God; and tuning his harp ready to join the choirs above, as soon as ever his attendant angels shall have received their commission to bear him hence.]

ADDRESS,

1. Those who are walking by sight—

[You are reputed wise by the men of this world; but are worse than fools in the estimation of your God. What has the world ever yet done for you? Has it ever yet afforded you any solid satisfaction? Possess what ye may, will not a pain, a loss, a disappointment, be sufficient to rob you of all your enjoyment? And what can it do for you in a dying hour? Will it prolong your life, or assuage your anguish, or pacify your conscience, or take away the sting of death? But, above all, what will it do for you at the bar of judgment? Will it bribe your Judge, or avert the wrath of an offended God, or mitigate your torments in the world of woe? You think the Christian unwise in having respect to things which his eye has never seen. But who will be found the wise man in that great and awful day? Not he that neglected God and his own soul: not he that trampled under foot his dying Saviour, and poured contempt on all the glory and blessedness of heaven; but he who lived as a pilgrim and sojourner here, and "looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and Maker is God." Oh, that you may be wise, and consider, ere it be too late, your latter end!"]

2. Those who profess to walk by faith—

[We thank our God that there are a goodly number of you who have learned to estimate things by their relation to eternity. O beg of God to "turn off your eyes from beholding vanity, and to quicken your souls in his way." Pray to him to "increase your faith," that your discernment of unseen things may be more clear, your enjoyment of them more rich, your improvement of them more uniform and abiding. Pray that your faith may be more and more influential on the whole of your life and conversation: and strive, in dependance on the Spirit of God, to walk more and more "worthy of your high calling." St. Paul, in his most assured prospects of glory, "laboured, that, whether present in the body, or absent from it, he might be accepted of the Lord."

Lord[m]." Do ye in this respect follow his example; "not setting your affections on any thing here below," but "having your conversation altogether in heaven, from whence you look for the Lord Jesus Christ" "to come and take you to himself," that you may "be with him, and like him for ever[n]."]

[m] ver. 8. [n] 1 John iii. 2.

DCCCCXC.

THE CONSTRAINING POWER OF CHRIST'S LOVE.

2 Cor. v. 14, 15. *The Love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that, if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, should not hence-forth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

ST. PAUL was more abundant both in labours and in sufferings than any other of the Apostles: but his zeal was by many considered no better than madness. To the lukewarm, as well as to those who were altogether careless, he appeared to be transported far beyond the bounds of reason and propriety; and they therefore did not hesitate to say that "he was beside himself." But whilst he was thus condemned as a wild enthusiast, he cultivated in reality the strictest sobriety; as is evident throughout his whole history, and in all his Epistles. But, "it was with him a small matter to be judged of man's judgment:" he cared not what opinion his adversaries formed of him, whilst he had the consciousness that he was actuated by zeal for God, and by love to man. Nevertheless he was not backward to declare whence his zeal arose; nor was he afraid to let his enemies themselves judge whether it was rational or not. He tells them, that, "if he was beside himself, it was to God," that he might be glorified; or, "if he was sober, it was for their cause," that they might be benefited: but that, whatever judgment might be passed upon him, the love of Christ constrained him, and under the influence of that he thought it right to live entirely to his God.

In

In vindication of the Apostle, and for the regulating of our own minds, we shall inquire,

I. What it was which stimulated him to such unparalleled exertions—

It was "the love of Christ which constrained him." By this I understand, not his love to Christ, but Christ's love to him; which is here mentioned in its two great leading features;

1. His dying for us—

[Wonderful indeed was this love! that when he was incapable of any increase of honour or happiness himself, he left the bosom of his Father, and took our nature upon him with all its sinless infirmities, on purpose that he might expiate our guilt by his own blood, and work out a righteousness for our acceptance before God——— That he should do this *so readily*, undertaking every thing as soon as it was proposed to him by the Father[a], and adhering to his engagement till it was perfectly fulfilled, not dissuaded by any[b], nor deterred by the dreadful prospect of all his sufferings[c], but drinking to the very dregs the bitter cup, and completing every thing till he could say "It is finished:" well may it be said, "What manner of love was this!"]

2. His employing for us the life that was restored to him at his resurrection—

[As "he died for our offences, so he rose again for our justification." He is as much occupied about the work of our Salvation now, as he was when living on earth, or dying on the cross: "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Every thing is put into his hands, in order that he may manage it for our good. All the works of Providence are directed and overruled by him for the furtherance of our welfare: and he, as the living Head of his people, imparts to them such measures of grace as he sees needful for them. In a word, he lives in them as in his temple, and carries on the whole work of grace in them, and never suffers so much as "one of them to be plucked out of his hands"——— Can we wonder that such love as this constrained the Apostle, and carried him forward, like a resistless torrent, in the service of his God?———]

The Apostle, in further vindication of himself, proceeds to state,

II. Why

[a] Ps. xl. 6—8. [b] Matt. xvi. 23. [c] Luke xii. 50.

II. Why he suffered it to have such an ascendant over him—

He acted not from feeling *only*, though doubtless the flame of love that was thus kindled in his soul burned with inextinguishable ardour[d]; but from judgment also: "he judged,"

1. That our obligations to the Lord Jesus Christ are infinite—

[It is plain, that "if one died for all, then were all dead." And was this *our* state? Were *we* dead in trespasses and sins, and under a sentence of eternal condemnation? Oh! What do we owe to that Saviour who emptied himself of all his glory for us, "who died for us when enemies," and actually became a curse for us, bearing in his own person all that was due to the iniquities of a guilty world! The apostate angels had no such mercy shewn to them: they fell, and had none to help them; and are therefore "reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day." And had not the Lord Jesus Christ died for us, we had been dead still, and should have been to all eternity companions with the fallen angels in misery, as we have been in transgression. Moreover, his life is as necessary for us as his death: for if he did not keep us every moment even as the apple of his eye, no one of us could endure unto the end: the great adversary of mankind, who first tempted them to sin, would beguile and ruin us for ever, if Jesus did not carry us in his bosom, and give us grace sufficient for our returning necessities.

Judge then whether this be not a reason for loving him, and for devoting ourselves unreservedly to his service? Can too much be done for him, who has done, and is doing, so much for us? Or should we think much of any sufferings that we may be called to endure for him? Should we not even rejoice if we are counted worthy to suffer for him, and welcome even death itself, if only "his name may be magnified?" If to entertain such sentiments, and to pursue such conduct, be madness, I would to God that we all were as obnoxious to the charge as Paul himself! But let the world say or think as they will, such a devotedness to God is "a reasonable service[e]."]

2. That the very end for which the Lord Jesus Christ has conferred those obligations upon us, is, that he may bind us to himself in a state of holy obedience—

[It is not to rescue us from death and hell only, that Jesus

[d] Cant. viii. 7, 8. [e] Rom. xii. 1.

Jesus has died for us, but to deliver us also from sin and Satan, and to bring us back to the state from which we are fallen. Were we created holy and happy, even like the angels themselves? to that state would the Lord Jesus elevate us again, that both in this world and to all eternity we may delight ourselves in God. This is declared to be the express purpose of his death[f]. Did he then "die to redeem us from all iniquity," and shall we still live in sin of any kind? Did he die to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works; and shall we not labour to attain this blessed character? Shall there be any bounds to our zeal; or shall we restrain it because a blind and ungodly world agree to call it madness? What if Mary was censured by the proud Pharisee for her over-righteous zeal; did Christ condemn it? Did he not even compel the Pharisee unwittingly to condemn himself[g]? We mean not by this to justify any departure from real sobriety of mind; for religion is a sober thing, being not like the transient glare of a meteor, but like the steady course of the sun: but this we would do; we would dissuade all from living in any measure to themselves, and bring them to live wholly and entirely to their God; and, if the world deride this as enthusiasm, and prescribe to us a lower standard of duty, we would say, with Peter, "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye:" for we cannot but consult his will, and approve ourselves to him[h].]

APPLICATION—

1. Let us all seek an interest in Christ—

[Has he died for us; and shall we die too? God forbid. It is a blessed truth, that he has "died for *all*," and "given himself a ransom for all," and "tasted death for every man," and made himself "a propitiation for the sins of the whole world." How awful then the thought that any should "perish, for whom Christ died!" What a bitter reflection will it be to such persons in the eternal world, that Christ died for them, and yet they would not seek for salvation from him! Oh! that this may not be our unhappy state! Let us look to him, and believe in him, and live by faith upon him now, that we may live with him for evermore.]

2. Let us meditate much upon his love—

[Were we but duly sensible of his love to us, we could not refrain from loving and serving him. O think what a subject for contemplation this is! It has been the one theme of praise and adoration in heaven for thousands of years, and will be to all eternity; and shall we not delight in the contemplation of it? It has "a height and depth, and length and breadth, that

[f] Tit ii. 14. [g] Luke vii. 37—47. [h] Acts iv. 19, 20.

that is utterly unsearcheable." Beloved Brethren, meditate upon it, till the fire kindle in your hearts, and you be constrained to "glorify him with your bodies, and your spirits which are his."]

3. Let us endeavour to answer the true end of all his love—

[You have heard what this was, even "that you should not henceforth live unto yourselves, but unto him." Now, then, set about this blessed work. Let the pleasures, the riches, the honours of the world be to you as the dirt under your feet: "be crucified to the world, and let the world be crucified unto you." And begin to walk as Christ walked, and to follow the example which St. Paul has set you. Let the world despise you, if they please; seek ye the approbation of your God: and when they, like Michal, deride your piety, say ye with holy David, "If this is to be vile, I will be yet more vile than thus[1]."]

[1] 2 Sam. vi. 22.

DCCCCXCI.

THE WAY OF RECONCILIATION WITH GOD.

2 Cor. v. 21. *For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

A MORE important question cannot be asked than this, "How shall man be just with God?" In the words before us, that question is resolved. The Apostle has before declared in more general terms, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:" but in our text he enters more particularly into the subject, and informs us, that, in order to effect a reconciliation between our offended God and us, God caused a double transfer to be made; first, of our sins to Christ, that they might be punished in him; and next, of Christ's righteousness to us, that it might be rewarded in us, and that we might be accepted through it. This doctrine of the mutual transfer of our sins to Christ, and Christ's righteousness to us, being not generally understood, we will,

I. Explain it—

Two things are to be explained:

1. The imputation of our sins to Christ—

[It is an undoubted fact, that the Lord Jesus Christ died under the curse of God's broken law. But was he himself a sinner? No: in him was no sin: both in his divine and human nature he was perfectly holy: and he was able to appeal to his bitterest enemies, "Which of you convinceth me of sin." Indeed, if he had had sin himself, he could not have atoned for our sins. The lamb that was slain at the Passover was to be without spot or blemish: and such was Christ, after the fullest possible examination, proclaimed to be by the very judge who condemned him. It was for our sins that he died: they were laid upon him by his own consent, that they might be punished in him, and that through his vicarious sacrifice we might be absolved. This will be best understood by the sacrifices which were offered under the law. The person who had sinned was exposed to the wrath of his offended God. But by God's appointment he brought an offering, a bullock or a kid, and, after putting his hands upon the head of his offering in token of his transferring his guilt to it, the victim was slain in his stead, and he was absolved from his guilt. The particular command, that the offender should put his hand on the head of his offering, places beyond all reasonable doubt the point we are insisting on[a]———]

2. The imputation of Christ's righteousness to us—

[Man, though forgiven, was still incapable of fulfilling perfectly in future the law of God, and consequently was incapable of working out a righteousness wherein he could stand before God. A righteousness therefore was provided for him fully adequate to all the demands of God's holy law, even the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by his own obedience unto death, not only "made an end of sin, and reconciliation for iniquity, but brought in also an everlasting righteousness[b]," which is "unto all, and upon all them that believe in him[c]." It is on this account that he is called, "The Lord our righteousness." Thus, "He is made righteousness unto us," and we are made, as our text expresses it, "the righteousness of God in him." It is not to be expected that this should be capable of such full illustration as the former point, because nothing similar to it ever did, or could, exist: yet we may behold something of the kind in the very sacrifices which were first offered. We are informed, that, after their

[a] Lev. iv. 4, 15, 24, 29. See also particularly Lev. xvi. 21, 22.
[b] Dan. ix. 24. [c] Rom. iii. 21, 22.

their fall, our First Parents "sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons," because by their sin they had made themselves naked to their shame. But God, we are told, "made coats of skins, and clothed them[d]." If it be asked, Of what beasts were these skins? we answer, Of those beasts which God had previously appointed to be offered in sacrifice to him: (for, if this was not the time when sacrifices were ordained, we have no account whatever of their first institution, notwithstanding they were undoubtedly of Divine origin:) and the very beasts which died as sacrifices for their sins, provided them also with clothing to cover their nakedness. Thus the Lord Jesus by his death atones for our sins, and by his righteousness clothes us as with an unspotted robe, in which we stand before our God without spot or blemish[e].]

But as this doctrine is disputed by many, we will proceed to,

II. Vindicate it—

Some deny this doctrine as unscriptural, whilst others abuse it to licentiousness: but against all we will vindicate it as the only true way of reconciliation with God: against,

1. The proud Infidel—

[One will say, This doctrine of a mutual transfer is not agreeable to my reason. But reason is not competent to judge of these matters. This is a point of pure revelation: and the office of reason in relation to it is, not to sit in judgment upon it, but to inquire whether it be really revealed: and, if it be, then is it to be assented to as true, whether we can comprehend it or not. But it is not at all repugnant to reason. We see daily somewhat of a similar nature transacted before our eyes. A man has made himself surety for his friend; that friend becomes insolvent; and his debt is required at the hands of his surety. If it be not discharged, the surety is imprisoned: but if the surety discharges the debt, the original debtor has no further claim made upon him. Thus do reason and experience fully sanction the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, and the liberation of the guilty through the sufferings of the innocent. And that this is the way for man's reconciliation with God, is abundantly testified throughout all the Inspired Writings. That the types are all founded in this notion, has already appeared: and the prophecies declare the same with one voice. No one can read the 53d chapter of Isaiah and doubt of this truth. "All our iniquities were laid upon him:" "he was wounded for

[d] Gen. iii. 7, 21. [e] Isai. lxi. 10.

for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed." The New Testament speaks the same language throughout: "he bare our sins in his own body on the tree," and "suffered, the just for the unjust[f]." Here there is a substitution of Christ in the place of sinners: just as it is said, that peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die, that is, would die in his place in order to preserve his life, so Christ died *for*, and in the place of, the ungodly, that by his own death he might preserve them from everlasting death[g]. Yes, however the scoffing infidel may deride these things, they are the very truth of God; nor is there any other way of reconciliation for any child of man.]

2. The self-righteous Pharisee—

[Many will admit that Christ died for sinners, who yet cannot receive the idea of his righteousness being imputed to them for their justification before God. They think that, though Christ by his death atoned for our sins, we are to procure for ourselves a title to heaven by a righteousness of our own. But this cannot be; for it would give to man a ground of glorying before God, when God has expressly said that all boasting is excluded by the Gospel, and that men must glory in Christ alone. This was the great error of the Pharisees of old; and it proved a stumbling-block to them to their everlasting ruin[h]. This is the great error of the Papists also, and, more than all other things, contributed to stir up the more enlightened part of the Christian world to separate themselves from the corruptions of the Church of Rome. Happy would it be, if many, who call themselves Protestants, did not in this matter go back again to the heresies which they profess to have renounced! But however pertinaciously men cling to the covenant of works, they never can obtain salvation by it: they must lay hold on the covenant of grace: they must renounce their own righteousness even as the apostle Paul himself did, and seek for acceptance by Christ's alone[i]: "in Christ shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory[k]."]

3. The Antinomian Professor—

[There are, it must be confessed, some who abuse the doctrine of our text, and maintain, that, because Christ is our righteousness, we need no righteousness of our own. They acknowledge indeed that Christ is our sanctification; but they suppose that his sanctification is imputed to us in the same way as his righteousness. But this is contrary

[f] 1 Pet. ii. 24. & iii. 18.
[g] Rom. v. 6—8.
[h] Rom. ix. 31—33. & x. 1, 2.
[i] Phil. iii. 9.
[k] Isai. xlv. 25.

trary both to reason and Scripture; for sanctification necessarily implies a change both of heart and life. We may easily conceive righteousness to be imputed, and that persons, not righteous in themselves, may be dealt with as righteous on account of the righteousness of another: but it is not possible that a person can be made inwardly holy by the holiness of another, any more than a dead tree can be made a fruitful one by having the fruit of another tree suspended on it. And the Scripture universally requires us to be daily putting off the old man and putting on the new. If real and radical holiness be not required of us, why is it so strongly and so continually inculcated throughout all the Apostolic writings? Of those who deny that the law is to the Believer a rule of life, we would ask one question: What does the law require which the Gospel does not? The law requires us to love God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves; and what does the Gospel require less? What part of our duty does it dispense with? Alas! It is a fatal error to imagine that holiness is not as necessary now as formerly. Were this true, Christ would actually be a minister of sin, in that he would be vacating the obligations of God's law, which is as immutable as God himself. For our justification, it is true, we do not need any righteousness of our own; and if we were to attempt to unite our righteousness to that of Christ, we should make void the whole Gospel; and Christ would have died in vain. But to attest the reality of our faith, and manifest our love to Christ; to glorify our God on earth, and obtain a meetness for heaven, holiness is absolutely indispensable, and if we cultivate it not, even universal holiness of heart and life, we shall never see the kingdom of God.]

Having thus endeavoured to establish the doctrine of our text, we proceed,

III. To improve it—

1. Let no man despair of mercy—

[What can any person want in order to his reconciliation with God, which has not been already wrought? There is a perfect atonement for your sins, and a perfect righteousness for your justification; and the benefits of both are offered you freely, without money and without price. All that is necessary to your reconciliation on God's part, is already done by Jesus Christ: and all that remains to be done on your part, is to receive gratefully what God offers freely. Truly this is, if I may so call it, the religion of a sinner: it is suited to sinners of every class: and wherever it is received in truth, it shall prove effectual for our present peace, and our everlasting salvation.]

2. Let

2. Let no man attempt to alter the plan which God himself has devised—

[We are ever leaning to the side of self-righteousness. But the righteousness which God imputes to us is, and ever must be, "a righteousness without works[l]." We must be justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Why should we wish to alter this? What is it less than madness for a person destitute of one single farthing to undertake to pay ten thousand talents, when he may be freely forgiven his whole debt? Be content to be indebted wholly to the grace of God, and the mediation of the Lord Jesus: and let God alone be exalted in your salvation.]

3. Let all who embrace this salvation endeavour to adorn it—

[This is the duty of all, and the privilege of all; this is what "the grace of God teaches us;" and it is a most important end of our union with Christ[m]. Are you reconciled to God? endeavour henceforth to manifest your friendship towards him in every possible way. Think not much of any thing you are called either to do or suffer for his sake. Can any thing be too much to do for one who has done so much for you, or to suffer for one who has suffered so much for you? If a man will lay down his life for an earthly friend, of how small account should you reckon any temporal interests, or even life itself, for such a friend as this? Seek to know more and more of this stupendous mystery revealed in our text: and, whilst you are filled by it with rapturous admiration, give full scope to all its transforming efficacy; till it has changed you into the very image of your God.]

[l] Rom. iv. 6. [m] Rom. vii. 4.

DCCCCXCII.

THE GRACE OF GOD NOT TO BE RECEIVED IN VAIN.

2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. *We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of Salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of Salvation.*

"THE grace of God," mentioned in the words before us, is the same with that which in the preceding context is called "the word of reconciliation;" it is the

the declaration, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This is elsewhere called, "the Gospel of the grace of God:" and a wonderful display of divine grace it is: because from the first devising of this plan of reconciliation in his eternal counsels to the last bestowment of its blessings on any child of man, it is altogether of grace: grace laid the foundation; grace raised the superstructure: and, when the head-stone shall be brought forth, the universal shout will be, "Grace, grace unto it[a]." In bringing men into a state of reconciliation with God, we Ministers are fellow-labourers with God[b]. Not that we do, or ever can do, any thing towards perfecting the work of Christ; (*that* was finished by him upon the cross, when he offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world;) but we are ambassadors from God, and speak to men in Christ's stead, and thus are "workers together with God:" and in this character we beseech you, as the Apostle did the Corinthians, "not to receive the grace of God in vain."

That we may proceed agreeably to the example set before us in our text, we shall consider,

I. The exhortation here given—

And here we shall distinctly notice,

1. The matter of it, "Receive not the grace of God in vain"—

[The generality of those to whom the word of reconciliation comes, hear it to no purpose: many pay no attention at all to it, but, like Gallio of old, care for none of these things. Many hate it, and oppose it with all their might; either regarding it as foolishness, through their philosophic pride, or making it a stumbling-block, though their self-righteous habits. To all such it comes in vain, or, rather, worse than in vain, seeing that it proves to them a savour of death to their more aggravated condemnation. In truth, all receive it in vain, who do not welcome it into their hearts, and conform to it in their lives. O that it might be embraced thus by all to whom it now comes! Receive it, Brethren, as the most stupendous effort of Divine Wisdom for the salvation of your souls———]

2. The

[a] Zech. iv. 7.

[b] 1 Cor. iii. 9. with the text.

2. The manner of it—"We, as workers together with God, beseech you"—

[We come not in our own name, when we announce these glad tidings, but in the name of our God and Saviour. We have no private ends to accomplish; it is the work of God, and that only, that we endeavour to advance: we have the same end in view that God himself had, when he sent his only dear Son into the world; the same that Christ had, when he died upon the Cross: the Ministry of reconciliation is committed to us; and, in the exercise of this Ministry, "we are fellow-workers with God." In this capacity we might command you all: but we choose rather, like the Apostle, to use the language of intreaty: yes, "We beseech you;" in the very name and stead of Christ himself, we beseech you, that ye receive not this grace in vain. If ye will not listen to us, listen to that God in whose name we speak; and, if ye will not bow to his commands, resist not his intreaties; for it is he himself who beseeches you, by our mouth, "Be ye reconciled to God."]

To impress this exhortation the more deeply on your minds, We will call your attention to,

II. The considerations by which it is enforced—

The Apostle urges his request,

1. From the written word—

["Whatsoever was written aforetime, was written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Every promise of God throughout the Bible has a general aspect upon the Church of God, and, *in the spirit of it*, may be applied to individuals of the present day, as well as to those to whom it was more immediately addressed[c]. The promise before us was primarily addressed to the Messiah, assuring him of success among the Gentiles[d]: but it is also fitly applicable to us; because all the blessings promised to the Head, belong also to all the members of his mystical body. To him this promise was fulfilled: in every time of need he was succoured; and in due season he was exalted above all his enemies: and so shall it be to us also, if we embrace his proffered salvation: What a delightful thought is this, that the very promise which was made to Christ, and fulfilled in him, is made to us, and shall be fulfilled in us! What an encouragement is this to receive the grace of God aright, when we are thus assured of the very same assistances and triumphs as Christ himself enjoyed!]

2. From

[c] Compare Josh. i. 5. with Heb. xiii. 5, 6. [d] Isai. xlix. 8.

2. From his own inspired comment upon it—

[The accepted time, the day of salvation, was then come to the Gentile world; and we may say with truth that it is come to us also. It is come to us, because the word of reconciliation now sounds in our ears, and is proclaimed to us in the name of God himself. How long this shall continue we know not. We know that the candlestick has long since been removed from Churches, where the light of the Gospel once shone as with meridian brightness: and how soon it may be removed from us, who can tell? But it does now shine, and the grace of God is displayed amongst us in all its freeness, and in all its fulness: we are authorized therefore to say with full assurance, that it is now the accepted time respecting you. But further, it is the accepted time with you, because you are yet here to receive these tidings. With multitudes who once heard the word of reconciliation, the day of grace is passed: they are now gone into that world where offers of mercy are never sent. And how soon may this be the case with you! Many who, but a year ago, were as likely to live as you, have been summoned into the presence of their God in the past year; and many who are now in health will, before another year, be called to follow them: but who they shall be we know not: the young and vigorous have no more security than the weak and sickly: it is of the present hour only that we can speak with any measure of certainty; and it is of that only that we can say, "It is the day of salvation." Yet it is possible that you may still be preserved in life, and the Gospel yet sound in your ears, and your day of salvation may have actually come to a close. We may, by our obstinate rejection of mercy, provoke God to withdraw his Holy Spirit, who alone can make those offers effectual for our good. He has said, that "his Spirit shall not always strive with man:" and when he sees us obstinately bent on our own evil ways, he may say of us, as he did of Israel of old, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." He has given us many awful warnings on this subject[e], and many fearful examples of the judgment actually inflicted[f]. Surely, this should lead us all to "seek the Lord" whilst he *may* be found, and to call upon him whilst he *is near*. The Lord grant that we may know the day of our visitation, and "seek the things belonging to our peace, before they be for ever hid from our eyes!"]

That this subject may be yet further impressed upon your minds, consider,

1. How

[e] Prov. i. 23—31. [f] Heb. iii. 11, 18, 19. Luke xiv. 24.

1. How wonderful this grace is—

[The more we consider the gift of God's only-begotten Son to assume our nature, and to expiate our guilt by his own blood, the more shall we be lost in wonder, love, and praise ———And shall all this he done in vain? Shall he become sin for us, and we not seek to be made the righteousness of God in him? ———]

2. How awful will be the consequence of rejecting it—

[Happier will Tyre and Sidon, yea, and Sodom and Gomorrha, be in the day of judgment, than those who hear and make light of these overtures of reconciliation. Think of those awful words, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"]

3. How truly blessed they are who receive the grace of God in truth—

[Well does the Psalmist say, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound!" Truly, they are beyond expression, and beyond conception, blessed. In this world, their "peace passeth all understanding," and their "joy is unspeakable and glorified:" but their portion of the world to come, who shall declare? An archangel would try to utter it in vain. And shall all this belong to those who accept God's offers of reconciliation aright? ———Let not one of you delay to flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you———]

DCCCCXCIII.

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD ENJOINED.

2 Cor. vi. 14—18. *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate; and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

A MINISTER never appears, to young people especially, in so forbidding an aspect, as when he is circum-

circumscribing men's intercourse with the world, and marking with precision the spirit that characterizes the true Christian in relation to the things of time and sense. Many on such an occasion are ready to account him an enemy to their happiness, and to censure him as a promoter of gloom and melancholy. But where do we find the Apostle pouring out such copious streams of love, as in the chapter before us? So accumulated were the expressions of his regard, that he thought it almost necessary to apologize for the more than ordinary effusions of his heart: "O, ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged." Yet in that very frame of mind did he give the directions in our text. As a parent in his dying hour would most tenderly guard his children against the temptations which were most likely to draw them aside from the paths of virtue and happiness, so does the Apostle on this occasion instruct and caution his Corinthian converts: and with a measure of the same spirit we would now proceed to the consideration of the subject before us.

That we may bring it before you with the greater perspicuity, we shall shew,

I. What is that separation from the world which Christianity requires—

It must be confessed, that the expressions in our text are often quoted and urged in too unqualified a manner, and without a due consideration of the difference between the Heathen world, amongst whom the Corinthians dwelt, and the professedly Christian world, amongst whom we dwell. Certainly a greater measure of separation was necessary for them than for us; inasmuch as the dangers to which intercourse with Heathens would subject them, were greater than those to which we are exposed by intercourse with those who profess the same faith with ourselves. Even they were not debarred from the courtesies of social life[a], nor from some degree of inter-

[a] 1 Cor. x. 27. [b] 1 Cor. v. 9, 10.

intercourse even with the most ungodly and profane[b]: much less are we from such a measure of communication with them, as is necessary for the discharge of our civil and social duties. But still we must "not be unequally yoked with them:".

1. We must not have fellowship with them in any of their evil deeds—

[It is probable that in the caution here given, the Apostle had some respect to idolatrous ceremonies, and idol feasts, in which a true Christian could not consistently take any part. Being himself "the temple of God, he could not have any communion with idols." Not but that the prohibition must extend also to every kind of evil, as well as to idolatry: for, in another place, the same Apostle speaks of "uncleanness, and covetousness, and foolish talking, and jesting, as bringing down the wrath of God upon all the children of disobedience;" and then adds, "Be not ye therefore partakers with them:" and again, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them[c]." This therefore is a law unto us, and to the Church of God in all ages, that, though we may to a certain degree unite with ungodly men in things that are indifferent, we must not unite with them in any thing that is evil, however much it may be sanctioned by the customs and usages of the world: "we must not follow a multitude to do evil."]

2. We must not form any close connexion with them—

[Under the law, men were forbidden to sow their fields with different kinds of seed, or to wear clothes that were formed of different kinds of materials, as of woollen and linen: nor were they to yoke together an ox, which was a clean animal, with an ass, which was unclean[d]. The import of these different laws was the same: they were all intended to intimate, that in the Lords' people there should be a perfect simplicity of mind, and an entire freedom from all mixture of evil. It is to the yoking of the clean and unclean together, that the Apostle refers in our text: and his illustration of it is beautiful. He represents Believers as the temple of the Lord, in which nothing but what is holy should be found. All the vessels of that temple must be holy; and all the Priests that officiate in it must be holy also. In confirmation of this he quotes a passage from the prophet Isaiah, where

[b] Eph. v. 3—7. 11.
[c] Isai. lii. 11.
[d] Deut. xxii. 9—11.
[e] 1 Cor vii. 39.

where the Priests in Babylon are enjoined to keep themselves from every species of defilement, in daily and hourly expectation that the order for their return to their own country shall be issued, and that they may be in a fit state to bear the vessels of the Lord, which would be restored by Cyrus for the service of the sanctuary at Jerusalem[e]. In such a state must all Christians, who are a holy priesthood, keep themselves, if they would please and honour God: they must "come out from among the ungodly, and be separate, and not touch any thing that is unclean." In Babylon they must be, till the time of their release from it: but they must keep themselves from all close connexion with the people of it, and be in heart and mind as separate as the vessels of the sanctuary are from any profane use. The Apostle's direction, not to be unequally yoked with Unbelievers, is justly urged against that most fatal of all connexions, the union of a Believer with an Unbeliever in the indissoluble bonds of marriage. This union, on the part of a Believer, is to be formed "only in the Lord[f]," and with such a partner as will prove an helpmate for the soul. But the same rule should as far as possible be observed in every other relation of life, that so the spiritual person may not augment his difficulties in the way to heaven.]

3. We must not cultivate any unnecessary intimacy with them—

[What is necessary for the discharge of our social duties must, as we have before said, be allowed: yet even that is rather to be submitted to from necessity than be sought from choice. The whole of the Apostle's argument extends to this. He supposes, that, as "the whole world lieth in wickedness," it is almost impossible for a Believer to be much in union with it without contracting some defilement. Hence he says, in reference to all who would divert us from the path of duty, or impede in any way our spiritual progress, "Come out from among them and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing." Aware how soon "evil communications will corrupt good manners," his advice is like that of Solomon, "enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men: avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away[g]." In a word, the true line of conduct seems to be that which a physician would follow in the time of a pestilential disease. He would go amongst the infected from a sense of duty, and with a desire to do them good: but he would not make them his companions, nor stay longer with them than his duty, and their necessities, required: and both before

[e] Isai. lii. 11. [f] 1 Cor. vii. 39. [g] Prov. iv. 14, 15.

before and after his visit, as well as during his intercourse with them, he would use all proper means to preserve himself from the contagion which he had reason to apprehend.]

Such being the separation from the world which Christianity requires, we proceed to shew,

II. Whence the necessity for it arises—

On this part of the subject the Apostle speaks very fully: and, because of the perfect conviction of his own mind, he addresses us in a way of appeal, determining to make us judges in our own cause.

The difference between the Believer and Unbeliever he supposes to be as great as between light and darkness, or Christ and Belial. And though this at first appears harsh and extravagant, it is really no exaggeration, if only we consider, that the one is a partaker of the Divine nature and a child of God, whilst the other is altogether carnal, a child of disobedience, a child of Satan. The question then is, What real fellowship can there be between persons so dissimilar? Let any one think what a total difference exists,

1. In their taste and sentiments—

[The Believer affects only heavenly things. As for the things of time and sense, he is dying to them daily, and suffers them to have as little influence as possible upon his mind. He is convinced that every thing in this world is lighter than vanity itself; and that the care of the soul is the one thing needful. To have a sense of the Divine presence, and an assured hope of dwelling with God for ever, to see sin increasingly mortified in his soul, and the image of God progressively advancing there, this is happiness in his estimation; and it is the only happiness he desires. But how different are the taste and sentiments of the merely natural man! all his affections are set on earthly things: nor has he any wish beyond them. If he could have an uninterrupted enjoyment of health, and wealth, and honour, he would wish for no other heaven: he would be well satisfied with his state, though he had never one glimpse of God's countenance, nor one foretaste of the heavenly glory.

Now we ask, What communion can there be between persons so totally discordant from each other? They live in a different

different element; and what is life to the one, is to the other death.]

2. In their habits and pursuits—

[The Believer delights in the Word of God and prayer. Meditation on heavenly things is the very food of his soul. "The life which he now lives in the flesh, he lives by the faith of the Son of God, who has loved him and given himself for him." To receive out of his Saviour's fulness more abundant communications of grace and peace, and to glorify him more in the midst of a wicked world, this is his daily desire, habit, and pursuit. But is it thus with the Unbeliever? Does he appear like a man running in a race, and determined to win the prize? No; there is no resemblance between the two characters: and, if yoked together, their union would be like that of a reptile and a bird: the reptile fetters the bird to the earth, whilst every motion of the bird, when aspiring after liberty and affecting its wonted flights, incommodes and pains the reptile: and the sooner a separation is effected, the better will each of them be pleased.

Now these things are by the Apostle made a matter of appeal. And we also appeal to yourselves respecting them: Is there not, in profession at least, this contrariety between the characters, and, as far as the Believer acts agreeably to his profession, does it not exist in practice also? Here then is abundant reason for the separation before spoken of: for it is impossible for the Believer to derive either comfort or benefit from an intercourse that damps all his best feelings, and obstructs all his best interests. And his true way to be holy and happy is, to "Come out from the world, and be separate, and if possible, not to touch the unclean thing."]

Nor will this separation be thought painful, if only we bear in mind,

III. The honour which God will confer on all who stedfastly maintain it—

The people of the world, in order to retain the Believer in a state of bondage, hold out to him the benefits of which a separation from them will deprive him—

[They tell him of his reputation, which will suffer; and of his interests, which will be impaired by what *they call* his needless singularity ——— Perhaps, and indeed not uncommonly, his own parents will be the most forward to discourage him in his heavenly course, and "his greatest foes will be those of his own household———"]

But

But the encouragement here afforded him is sufficient to outweigh it all—

[What astonishing words are these! "I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." What need we care about being cast out by men, if we are received by God? yea, if even disowned and disinherited by earthly parents, what loss do we sustain, if God himself acknowledge us as his sons and daughters, and provide an inheritance for us worthy of that high relation? Think of the sweet access which a child has to his parent, the delightful confidence he has in his love, and the full assurance he enjoys of all suitable provision in the time of need. This, and infinitely more than this, does the Believer enjoy in the presence of his God: and beyond all this he looks forward to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Say, Believer, how small are thy privations, when such are thine enjoyments! how contemptible are thy losses, when such are thy gains! — — —]

ADDRESS,

1. Those who are just entering on the divine life—

[" Let every one who sets himself to seek his God, prepare his soul for temptation." Yes, Beloved, if you will be followers of Christ, you must have some cross to bear. The servant cannot be above his lord: if they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more will they those of his household. Be content then to have it so. Do not imagine that you can ever reconcile the ungodly to the ways of God. If you will maintain friendship with them, you must renounce your friendship with him. "You cannot serve God and Mammon:" and even a wish to do so is in God's estimation constructive treason[h]. You think perhaps to do them good: but you are infinitely more likely to be injured by them, than to impart any solid benefit to them[i]. They must come to you; not you to them. To attempt to unite with them is folly and madness. You do not meet on equal terms. There is nothing that they will not say and do to draw you from God: but they will not suffer you to say or do any thing to draw them to God. They will propose to you to join with them in their amusements: but if you were to propose to them to join with you in reading the word of God and prayer, they would pronounce you mad. Come out then from among them and be separate, even as your Lord and Saviour did. "Ye are not of the world, says our Lord, even as

[h] Jam. iv. 4. See the Greek, and mark well the import of every word.

[i] See Hag. ii. 12, 13.

as I am not of the world." Let this saying be verified in you: and let such be your love to his cross, that by means of it "the world may be crucified unto you, and you unto the world."]

2. Those who have made some progress in the Divine life—

[Do not imagine that, because the world have not hitherto prevailed to draw you back to them, you need not be on your guard against them. Remember Demas: "remember Lot's wife." The world will never cease from their efforts, because, whilst you walk stedfastly with God, you are a reproach to them. Like Noah, you, by your lively faith, and practical fear, "condemn the world." Your own experience will be a sufficient warning to you in future. You have doubtless at times been drawn into a closer intimacy with the world than was expedient: and what, I would ask, has been the effect of it? Have you found the same satisfaction in their vanities that you have found in holy exercises? Have you not found that fellowship with them has invariably tended to interrupt your fellowship with God? When you have been walking closely with God, you have known somewhat of what is meant by those words, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them:" but have you ever been taught this by communion with the world? Your own consciousness will give the best answer to these questions. Let past experience teach you; for it is in perfect unison with the word of God, that to be "holy, and to be harmless, you must be separate from sinners." Let your one concern then be, to "present yourselves as living sacrifices unto God, which is your reasonable service." And "be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." And be assured, that if, like the little remnant in the Church of Sardis, you keep your garments undefiled, you shall walk with God in white, approved by him as conquerors, and rewarded with "a crown of glory that fadeth not away."]

DCCCCXCIV.

SANCTIFICATION WROUGHT BY THE PROMISES.

2 Cor. vii. 1. *Having these promises therefore, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

CHRISTIANITY, if viewed aright, is a remedy suited

suited to the necessities of fallen man. Man has lost both the favour and the image of God: and the Gospel restores him to both: to his favour first, and afterwards to his image. The promise made to Adam in Paradise, that "the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head," was given without any preparation of heart on Adam's part, yea, altogether unsolicited and unsought. It was, in fact, not given to Adam personally; but was rather a part of the judgment denounced against the serpent that had beguiled him[a]. Thus, in the passage before us, the promises in the close of the preceding chapter are given freely to the Sons of men: and the sanctification that follows it, is to be the fruit and effect of the promises apprehended by them, and applied to their souls.

To put this matter in a clear light, we shall shew,

I. The nature and extent of the sanctification required of us—

Sanctification is not a mere removal of evil from the soul, but a positive renovation of the whole man. It is set forth in our text as,

1. The mortification of all sin—

[As man consists of two parts, flesh and spirit, so sin resides in both, and defiles both; and is therefore distinguished into fleshly and spiritual filthiness; the former assimilating us to the beasts, and the latter to that great enemy of God and man, the Devil: as our Lord has said, "Ye are of your father the Devil; and the lusts of your father ye will do[b]." By "the filthiness of the flesh," we understand, all those sins which take their rise from, and are acted by, the body; as uncleanness, intemperance, sloth. By "the filthiness of the Spirit," we understand, those sins which are more independent of the body, and have their proper residence in the mind; as pride, envy, malice, wrath, revenge; discontent, covetousness, deceit; impenitence, unbelief, and numberless other evils. But from all of these we are to be cleansed. If one be retained willingly, deliberately, habitually, it will so defile, as utterly to destroy, the soul: as God has said, "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy[c]." It is to no purpose for any to plead that God has given them passions, and that they are not able to restrain them; for God will enable us to restrain them, if we cry to him for help:

[a] Gen. iii. 14, 15. [b] John viii. 44. [c] 1 Cor. iii 17.

help: He has declared, that "his grace shall be sufficient for us." Neither, on the other hand, must any one think well of himself, merely because he does not indulge any gross corporeal lusts: for he may be "fulfilling the desires of the mind to a vast extent," even whilst he restrains "those of the flesh[d];" and the indulgence of spiritual lusts is no less hateful in the sight of God, than the gratifications which are more disgraceful in our eyes. A proud Christian, a passionate Christian, a discontented Christian, or an unbelieving Christian, is as palpable a contradiction in terms, as a drunken or a lewd Christian. Evil tempers and dispositions of whatever kind must be subdued and mortified; if but one reign in the soul, we are Christians in name only, and not in deed and in truth: for "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts[e]." Would to God that Professing Christians would more attentively consider this! It is a grievous mistake to imagine, that any notions however scriptural, or any virtues however specious, will be of any avail, as long as one evil temper remains in us unmortified and unsubdued. "If we regard iniquity in our hearts, (of whatever kind it be,) the Lord will not hear us."]

2. The cultivation of universal holiness—

[Not contented with "putting off the old man," we are to be continually "putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness:" we are to be "renewed *in the spirit of our mind*[f]." This is an expression that deserves to be deeply considered: for it contains the very essence of real sanctification. We must "put on the Lord Jesus Christ[g]," and have in ourselves the very "mind that was in him[h]." Mark his every disposition; his delight in God's presence, dependence on his care, and zeal for his glory; his self-denying habits of every kind, and, at the same time, his patience and meekness, his compassion and love towards the children of men, even towards his most inveterate enemies: these are to be the dispositions which we are to cultivate, and in which we are to grow up even to perfection[i]. Whatever we have attained, we are to "forget it all, and press forward for more[k]," and to "grow up into him in all things as our living Head[l]." All this we are to do "in the fear of God." *This expression must be particularly marked:* for in "the fear of God" the perfection of holiness consists. By "the fear of God," I understand that tenderness of conscience, and watchfulness of mind, that guards against even a thought which would be displeasing to God. There is a susceptibility of impression, (such as exists in the apple of the

[d] Eph. ii. 3. [e] Gal. v. 24. [f] Eph. iv. 23. 24.
[g] Rom. xiii. 14. Gal. iii. 27. [h] Phil. ii. 5. [i] 1 Thess. v. 23.
[k] Phil. iii. 13, 14. [l] Eph. iv. 15.

the eye when touched by the smallest mote in the air,) which we should keep alive in our hearts in reference to sin, and have in uninterrupted exercise. In this the Lord Jesus Christ himself pre-eminently excelled, being "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord[l]:" and it is by this that God has engaged to perfect his work within us, "causing us to fear him for ever," and "putting his fear into our hearts that we may not depart from him[m]."

This is the crown of all Christian graces and attainments: without which nothing is of any value. It is the lowered tint which marks the ripeness and maturity of our choicest fruit: it is that by which the man of God is perfected, and the image of God is completed in the soul.]

The mention of the promises in connexion with this, leads me to shew,

II. The use of the promises in the production of it—

St. Peter tells us, that "by the promises we are made partakers of the Divine nature[n]:" and to the same effect does St. Paul speak in the words before us. It is by the promises that we are to accomplish the task assigned us in the text. For this blessed work they are well fitted: for they operate,

1. In a way of motive—

[Who can contemplate the promises in the preceding context, and not feel his obligations to Almighty God so great as to outweigh every other consideration under heaven? Does God promise to "dwell and walk in us" as in his temple? Does he engage to "be our God," as much as if there were no other creature in the universe besides ourselves that had any interest in him? Does he declare that he will both "receive us," and act towards us, as the most indulgent Father towards his own beloved "sons and daughters?" Is all this promised to us freely, even to all who will separate themselves from an ungodly world, and seek his face? Who can contemplate this, and not instantly inquire, "What shall I render to the Lord for all these benefits?" Who can have such an hope in him, and not endeavour to "purify himself, even as God is pure[nn]?" It is thus that Paul felt his obligations to the Lord; and it is from the consideration of them that he urges us to an unreserved devotedness of ourselves to God, assuring us that the mercies conferred

[l] Isai. xi. 2, 3.

[m] Jer. xxxii. 38—40. These and the passage in Note [l], should be carefully noticed and compared in this view.

[n] 2 Pet. i. 4. [nn] 1 John iii. 3.

conferred upon us render an entire consecration of ourselves to him "a reasonable service[o]."]

2. In a way of encouragement—

[Any one who should merely contemplate the greatness of the work assigned him, would sit down in despair: "How shall I hope so to cleanse myself from all sin, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God?" But in the promises, he finds ample ground of confidence and joy. "What! has God freely given to me his only dear Son, and will he not with him also freely give me all things?" Would an earthly father not refuse bread to his famished child, and will my Heavenly Father not give his Holy Spirit to me in the measure that I need his influences? To what purpose are all these promises which he has given me, if he will not work in me that measure of sanctification which is necessary to the complete enjoyment of them? But I find holiness amongst the most distinguished of his promises. He has said, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you[p]:" &c. I will not fear then to engage in the work of "cleansing myself," since God has promised to perform it in me[q]: for, "if he work, who shall let it?" My weakness, so far from being an obstacle to him, shall rather be an occasion for him to glorify himself the more[r]: and, "through him strengthening me, I can do all things[s]."

3. In a way of actual efficiency—

[The promises, as contained in the word, effect nothing: it is only as dwelling in the heart, and relied upon in the soul, that they produce any saving operation. Then they are of necessity accompanied by the Holy Spirit, who works in and by them; and who, on that very account, is called "The Holy Spirit of promise[t]." When applied to the soul by him, they have, if I may so speak, a buoyancy, bearing up the soul to high and heavenly things. We know that we, by filling a capacious vessel with air of a lighter species, can cause it to rise by its own buoyancy, and to soar above the clouds: how much more then shall we, when "filled with the Spirit," and borne up upon the wings of promise, rise in our hearts and minds to the highest heavens! We are aware that this illustration is not to be pressed too far; but neither is it to be discarded altogether as fanciful, since our blessed Lord himself has said, that "his Holy Spirit in us shall be within us a well of water springing up unto everlasting

[o] Rom. xii. 1.
[p] Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.
[q] Phil. ii. 12, 13.
[r] 2 Cor. xii. 9.
[s] Phil. iv. 13.
[t] Eph. i. 13.

lasting life[u]." Here the heavenly tendency of the principle within us is plainly asserted: and, whatever be the word which first begets us to the heavenly life, it is the word of promise which brings the soul to its full maturity of Christian perfection[x]. It was the abundant in-dwelling of the promises in the Apostle's soul that filled him with "the love of Christ, and constrained him" to live unto his God and Saviour in a way that no other man ever did, and caused his "conversation to be continually in heaven[y]." And in proportion as they are realized in our souls, will be the sanctifying effects produced by them.]

ADDRESS,

1. Those who are seeking holiness as their end, without using the promises as the means—

[This is common both in those who are altogether ignorant of the Gospel, and in those whose views of it are yet dim and clouded: in the one, it springs from self-righteous pride; in the others, from mistaken and misplaced humility: but in both it is a fatal evil.

As for the self-righteous formalist, he would reverse the Apostle's exhortation, and, instead of saying, "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves," they would say, Having cleansed ourselves, let us expect a fulfilment of all the promises. But no man shall ever attain salvation in such a way as that. No man can ever attain such holiness as God requires, but by the promises; nor, if he could, would such attainments ever purchase him an interest in the promises. They must be received as freely as they are given: they are given to us as sinners, as "ungodly," as having no works whatever to bring to God[z]: and, if we will not embrace them under this character, renouncing all dependence on our own righteousness, and seeking to be saved by grace alone, we shall never have so much as one of them fulfilled to us.

Nor is the legal Christian in reality building on any better foundation than the self-righteous formalist: for, though he does not profess to found his hopes on his own righteousness, yet he looks to his own attainments as his warrant for relying on the promises of his God. He thinks it would be presumptuous in him to rely on the promises, because he cannot find in himself that measure of holiness which he considers as necessary to qualify him for an interest in them. But this is the very same error which the self-righteous formalist runs into: and the same answer, in a measure, must be given to it: only,

[u] John iv. 14.
[x] Jam. i. 18. 1 Pet. i. 23. Eph. v. 26, 27.
[y] 2 Cor. v. 14. Phil. iii. 20.
[z] Rom. iv. 4—6.
[a] Phil. iii. 9. Rom. iii. 24. Eph. ii. 8, 9

only, whilst to the formalist I say, You *must* rely upon the promises; to the legal character I say, You *may*. They are all given as freely as the air you breathe: and precisely as the Converts on the day of Pentecost apprehended them, so may you apprehend them freely, without money and without price: and as the jailor was justified by his faith the very instant he believed, so shall you be.

Nor need we be afraid of this doctrine as having a licentious tendency; for what was the effect of it in the Apostolic age? the same shall it be in this and every age; the promises of God will always, when duly received, operate to the production of holiness; and every one who embraces them aright, will proceed to cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.]

2. Those who rest in the promises without regarding the end to be produced by them—

[Such persons there are, and ever have been, in the Church of God; persons, who think it legal to exhort men to holiness, and who make no other use of the promises, than to cherish in themselves an assurance of their own acceptance with God. These persons would correct the Apostle as an ignorant and ill-instructed Teacher. They would say, "Having these promises, let us be full of confidence and joy:" but they would never deign to say, "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves:" *this*, forsooth, is *legal*. But whether *they* be right, or *the Apostle*, judge ye. Let such self-deceiving and conceited professors imagine as they will, God does not make so light of holiness: on the contrary, he tells us, that by our works we shall be judged in the last day, and by our works we are to be judged even now. Yes, by their fruits shall the followers of Christ be known: and if we slight them, we shall find all our pretended faith to be of no effect. "In vain shall we say, Lord, Lord, if we do not the things which he says." I must intreat all then to shun this deadly heresy; and to search and try themselves, and see what effect the promises have produced upon them; for, as God is true, "without holiness shall no man see the Lord."]

3. Those who are seeking the end by the appointed means—

[Shall you fail of success? Assuredly you shall not: for "the word of promise will bring forth fruit in you, as it doth in all the world." Treasure up in your minds all "the exceeding great and precious promises," which "in Christ Jesus are yea and Amen:" dwell upon them: plead them before God in prayer: declare to him your affiance in them: expect their accomplishment: limit not the Holy One of Israel

Israel in any thing: bear in mind that with him all things are possible. Verily, if you will thus believe, you shall see the glory of God. Sin shall be weakened in you: Satan shall flee before you: all the principalities and powers of hell shall be bruised under your feet: in a word, Christ shall be formed in you, and "you shall be changed into his image from glory to glory by the Spirit of your God." Strengthened by these, your consolations shall be rich, your progress rapid, your victories secure: and in due time you shall possess the full substance of all the promises in the complete attainment of God's perfect image, and the everlasting fruition of his glory.]

DCCCCXCV.

THE GROUNDS OF A MINISTER'S REGARD TO HIS PEOPLE.

2 Cor. vii. 3. *You are in our hearts to die and live with you.*

THERE is in every man a quick sensibility with respect to any thing that may affect his character: even a slight insinuation, that seems to convey reproof, is keenly felt. On this account we ought to be extremely cautious, not only when criminating others, but even when vindicating ourselves; because a necessary self-vindication may easily be construed as an oblique censure upon others. We cannot but admire the delicacy of the Apostle's mind, when asserting the integrity of his conduct towards the Church at Corinth. There were some in that place who had traduced his character: for the sake of others therefore it was necessary that he should declare his innocence with respect to the things that were laid to his charge. But fearing that, in doing this, he might appear to cast a reflection indiscriminately on the whole body, he adds, with exquisite tenderness and affection, that, so far from intending to condemn them all, he was willing, if his other duties would admit of it, to live and die among them.

In order to promote in all this amiable disposition, we shall consider,

I. The grounds of the Apostle's love—

St.

St. Paul felt a love towards the whole human race: but he was filled with a peculiar affection towards the Corinthians on account of,

1. Their relation to God—

[The Apostle had reason to believe that the Corinthians, nothwithstanding some great evils which obtained among them[a], were truly converted to God; and that the greater part of them were very eminent Christians[b].

This was a just ground for loving them. Indeed, if he had not been penetrated with an unfeigned regard for them, he would have no evidence of his own love to God: for "he who loveth him that begat, must love those who are begotten of him[c]."]

2. Their relation to himself—

[Having been, in God's hand, the instrument of their conversion, he stood related to them as their spiritual father[d]. Now, as a peculiar affection subsists between those who bear this relation according to the flesh, so it is reasonable that there should be a mutual regard between those also who are thus united in the bonds of the Spirit. Doubtless the Apostle did not confine his regards to these[e]: but, having "travailed in birth with them," he felt all the anxieties and affections of a parent towards them.]

The fervour of his love will appear from,

II. The way in which he manifested it—

We may notice in the context,

1. His affectionate remembrance of them—

[He boasted of them wherever he went: he held them up as peculiarly worthy of imitation[f]: and so great was the satisfaction which he felt in hearing of their welfare, that it far over-balanced all the sufferings he endured. What clearer proof could he give of his affection for them?]

2. His faithful admonitions—

[Though he loved them, he was not blind to their faults. When he saw them deviating from the path of duty, he performed the office of a Monitor and Guide. He changed his voice towards them, as he saw occasion: sometimes he spake with

[a] 1 Cor. i. 11. & iii. 1—4. & v. 1, 2. & vi. 5—8. & viii. 9—12. & xi. 18—22. & xiv. 26.
[b] 1 Cor. i. 5—7. & 2 Cor. viii. 7.
[c] 1 John v. 1.
[d] 1 Cor. iv. 15. & 2 Cor. xii. 14. with Acts xviii. 1—18.
[e] Col. ii. 1. [f] 2 Cor. vii. 14. & 2 Cor. viii. 24. & ix. 1, 2.

with the authority of an Apostle[g], and sometimes with the tenderness of a friend or parent[h]. This was an eminent proof of his love, because it shewed that his concern for their souls swallowed up every other consideration[i].]

3. His devotion to their service—

[He regarded not wealth, or ease, or honour; but would have been contented "to live and die with them" who had but ill requited all his past kindness: Yea, he declared, that "he would most gladly spend and be spent for them, though the more abundantly he loved them, the less he were loved[k]." Nothing short of laying down our life for any person could testify more love than this.]

APPLICATION—

1. Let us improve our intercourse with each other in life—

[It is the happiness of a Minister and his people to have frequent and familiar intercourse with each other. We have through the mercy of our God enjoyed it; but alas! how little have we improved it! Let us look unto our God for his blessing upon us in future[l]: for without that "neither Paul can plant, nor Apollos water, to any good purpose[m]."]

2. Let us prepare for our separation in death—

[As "the Priests under the law could not continue by reason of death," so neither can we under the Gospel. We must go to give an account of our stewardship; and you to answer for the advantages you have enjoyed. Let us be looking forward to that solemn meeting which we shall have at the bar of judgment. Let us implore help from God, that we may discharge our duties towards each other aright; and meet again, not as witnesses against each other, but as fellow-heirs of his glory. And the Lord grant that we may then be your joy, and that you may be "our joy and crown of rejoicing" to all eternity[n]!]

[g] 1 Cor. iv. 18, 19.
[h] 2 Cor. ii. 1—5. & 1 Cor. iv. 14.
[i] Lev. xix. 17. with ver. 12.
[k] 2 Cor. xii. 15.
[l] 2 Cor. vi. 11—13.
[m] 1 Cor. iii. 5—7.
[n] 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20. & 2 Cor. i. 14.

DCCCCXCVI.

LIBERALITY TO THE POOR.

2 Cor. viii. 1—5. *Moreover, Brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the Churches of Macedonia: how that,*

that, in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, (I bear record,) yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves: praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints: and this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

THE texture of the human mind is extremely delicate: and every one, who would produce any beneficial effect upon others, must approach them with tenderness and care. We may, by an unseasonable urgency, cause a person to revolt from a measure, to which by a more gentle address he might have easily been persuaded. The mind of man naturally affects liberty; and will be more powerfully moved, when its decisions appear to be the consequence of volition, than when they are called forth by the compulsory influence of persuasion. This the apostle Paul well understood, and bore, as it were, in constant remembrance. Not that he on any occasion acted with artifice: no; his caution was the result of his own exquisite delicacy and holy refinement: and his success in affecting the minds of others bore ample testimony to the wisdom of his measures. He was anxious to obtain from amongst the Gentile Churches relief for the distressed and persecuted saints at Jerusalem. In writing therefore to the Church at Corinth, who were more opulent, he endeavoured to interest them in behalf of their suffering Brethren in Judea. But he did not proceed, as we might have expected, to expatiate upon the wants of the sufferers, or on the obligations of the Church at Corinth to relieve them; but simply communicated, as an article of pleasing intelligence, the liberality that had been displayed towards them by the poorer Churches of Macedonia; and then stirred them up to imitate so laudable an example.

With the same view we shall now,

I. Consider the example here set before us—

The Churches here referred to were those of Thessalonica,

Thessalonica, Berœa, and Philippi: and truly their example was most eminent in respect of,

1. Their liberality—

[The real extent of liberality must not be judged of by the sum given, so much as by the circumstances under which it is given: our blessed Lord has told us, that the widow's mite exceeded in value all that the most opulent had bestowed, because their donations were a small portion only of what they possessed, whereas her's was her all, even all her living. To view the liberality of the Macedonians aright, we must particularly notice the *time* and *manner* of its exercise.

It was in a *time* of "*great affliction* and of *deep poverty*." Now persons in great affliction are for the most part so occupied with their own troubles, as to have but little either of leisure or inclination to enter into the concerns of others ——— And, if they be at the same time in a state of deep poverty, they seem by their very situation, as it were, to be exempt from any obligation to relieve the wants of others: if they shed a tear of sympathy, it is as much as, under their circumstances, can be expected of them——— But behold, it was in this very state, and under these circumstances, that the Macedonian Churches exerted themselves for the relief of persons belonging to a different and distant country, of persons too, who, though agreeing with them in the profession of Christianity, differed widely from them in many points of subordinate importance.

The *manner* too in which their liberality was exercised deserves particularly to be noticed. It was put forth *voluntarily:* they waited not for any application to this effect from the Apostle; they were willing of their own mind to embrace the opportunity afforded them of fulfilling a duty so congenial with the best feelings of their hearts. It was exercised also *bountifully*. Their ability was the only measure of their gifts. In some respect, they seemed, as it were, to exceed even that: for "to their power, and beyond their power," they exerted themselves, insomuch that, according to God's estimate of their gifts, they "abounded unto the riches of liberality." And what they did, they did *zealously*. They did not make an offer which they hoped would be refused, and then, on the refusal, feel pleased that the will had been accepted for the deed: no; they forced the Apostle to accept their donations: they would not suffer him to decline their offer; "they prayed him with much intreaty that he would be their almoner, and be the medium of conveying to their afflicted Brethren the relief which God had enabled them to bestow.

If

If we would know whence it was that they were enabled so to act, the text informs us: it was, primarily, from "the grace of God" operating powerfully on their hearts; and, next, from the joyful frame of their minds, which bore them up above all their own trials, and exulted in every opportunity of manifesting their love to their blessed Lord and Saviour. They had "an abundance of joy" in the midst of their deep poverty; and that "joy in the Lord was their strength."]

2. Their piety—

[This was not a whit less remarkable: indeed, it was the foundation, of which their liberality was the superstructure. They "first gave up themselves to God" in a way both of *secret surrender*, and of *open profession*.

They surrendered themselves wholly to Christ as his willing subjects and servants. Without this, all their liberality would have been a mere Heathen virtue. If, without love to man, a person might "give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet be no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal," much more would his best actions be of no value, if not springing from love to God. It is this principle that constitutes the perfection of every thing we do, and makes a wish, a sigh, a groan more acceptable to God than the most splendid action without it. Every thing emanating from it has "an odour of a sweet smell, and is a sacrifice truly acceptable and well pleasing to God."

At the same time they openly and boldly confessed Christ before men: "they gave themselves to the Apostle, and to the Church, by the will of God." They were not timid Christians, fearful of augmenting their afflictions by an open profession of the Gospel: they were willing to bear any cross which their adherence to Christ might bring upon them. They had already been brought into "a great trial of affliction, and to deep poverty," for his sake: but none of these things moved them, nor did they "count even life itself dear to them," if only they might but honour their Divine Master, and finish their course with joy. This put an additional value on their services, as manifesting the very spirit that was in Christ, "who willingly impoverished himself to enrich a ruined world[a]."]

Having so excellent an example before us, we will now,

II. Propose it to your imitation—

First, we would call you to imitate their piety—

[This, though last mentioned in the text, was first in point

[a] ver. 9.

point of time, and was, in fact, the source and fountain of all the graces which they exercised.

We call upon you then to "*give yourselves up wholly to the Lord.*" This is the indispensable duty of every Child of man. As creatures, we are bound to serve and glorify our God, from whom we have received all that we are and have; but, as redeemed sinners, our obligation to serve him is infinitely enhanced. The Apostle tells the Corinthians in his former Epistle, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price:" so say I to every one amongst you, "Ye are not your own." Nothing, that you either are or have, is your own; the members of your bodies, the faculties of your souls, your time, your property, your influence, all belong to him, "whose you are, and whom you are bound to serve:" all are to be improved for his glory; as St. Paul has said, "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify him with your body and your spirit, which are his." And this is as reasonable as it is necessary; agreeably to what he has elsewhere said, "Yield yourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

But with this secret surrender of yourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ there must also be *an open avowal of your adherence to him.* "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "If we will be Christ's disciples indeed, we must take up our cross daily and follow him:" we must follow him "without the camp, bearing his reproach:" and so far must we be from dreading his cross, that we must "glory in it," and "rejoice that we are counted worthy to bear it," and "esteem, as Moses did, the reproach of Christ as greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." We must never be ashamed of Christ; for, if we be, he will be ashamed of us "in the presence of his Father, and of the holy angels." "If we confess him, he will confess us; but, if we deny him, he will deny us." When the Apostle says, "they gave themselves unto *us* by the will of God," it must not be understood as if he gloried in gaining proselytes to *himself:* it is of their union with *the Church,* as avowed friends and followers of Christ, that he speaks; and *this* all must be, if they would approve themselves faithful to their Lord and Master: *this* is the will of God respecting every Child of man; that we "come out from the world, and be separate" from it, and be "as lights shining in a dark place," "holding forth in the whole of our spirit and conversation the word of life."

Let me then urge upon you all this duty. The Churches of Macedonia acted thus in defiance of all the malice of men or devils: though brought by means of it into "a great trial of

of affliction and deep poverty," they turned not back, but strove the more to glorify their God in proportion as their enemies sought to suppress their zeal. So then do ye also: harbour not for a moment that "fear of man which bringeth a snare:" "fear not man, who can only destroy the body; but fear him, and him only, who, when he has destroyed the body, can destroy both body and soul in hell."]

Next, we would invite you to imitate also their liberality—

[*Your obligations* to it are as great as theirs: for you, as well as they, "have been redeemed by the precious blood of that spotless Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ"———*The occasion* too, if not altogether similar, is quite as urgent: for if we plead not now in behalf of persons reduced to the deepest distress by persecution, we plead for those whose circumstances are most indigent, and whose temporal benefit is consulted with an ulterior view to the welfare of their souls[b]———May I not add too that *the means afforded you* are similar? You cannot personally perform all the offices that are executed by those who have undertaken to dispense your charity[c]———Nor will it be necessary for you to "pray others with much intreaty" to be your agents; since a number of suitable persons have voluntarily devoted themselves to this good work.

Let me then call upon you all to "manifest" by your liberality "the sincerity of your love to Christ." I will not except any from this labour of love. Are any of you "in a great trial of affliction," and at the same time "in deep poverty;" I would not on that account dispense with your exertions; nor would you wish me so to do, if you have received the grace of God in truth. I will not indeed be importunate with you, as with others: but I will remind you of what was done by the Christians of former days in circumstances more afflictive than your own; and I will add, that their conduct is set forth by the Apostle as worthy to be followed by Christians in every age: I say, I will not *urge* you to liberality on this occasion; but I well know what you *will* do, if "God has bestowed his grace upon you:" I know, that "to your power, and even beyond your power, you will be willing of yourselves." But to those who are in circumstances of ease and affluence I would say, Look at the example set before you;

[b] This was delivered in aid of a *Visiting Society*, where the souls of the persons visited are the chief object. But the subject may be adapted to any charity, by stating its peculiar purposes.

[c] Here again, the statement must be varied according to circumstances: if the Charity be a Hospital, or School, or any other, a suitable statement will be necessary.

you; and think what exertions *your* circumstances require. Oh, give not in a grudging or sparing manner; but let it be seen by your donations what you understand by "abounding unto the riches of liberality:" and, as God in his providence has enabled you to stretch forth Corinthian hands, shew that he has also in his mercy given you Macedonian hearts——]

DCCCCXCVII.

THE BENEFIT ARISING FROM ATTENTION TO THE POOR.

2 Cor. ix. 12—15. *The administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God: (while by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men:) and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.*

IN this happy Country, benevolent institutions of every kind abound, insomuch that there is scarcely any distress to which human nature can be subjected, for which some appropriate provision is not made. ——— But of all charities, there are none that deserve our support more, than those which have respect to the poor in an hour of sickness, and provide for their temporal and spiritual wants at the same time. Such is the Institution to which we are to call your attention this day. We will briefly set before you,

I. The nature of the Institution—

[It is called 'A Visiting Society.' Its design is to find out the modest and industrious poor in a time of sickness, and to administer to them relief for their bodies, and, at the same time, instruction for their souls. For the better accomplishment of this design, the town and neighbourhood are divided into districts; in each of which, two persons, one of each sex, are appointed to superintend their immediate vicinity, to inquire into such cases of distress as may come within their knowledge, and to afford them such relief as their immediate necessities may seem to require. As in such seasons the ears of men are more open to instruction, the Visitors are to avail themselves of the opportunity thus afforded

forded them, to direct the attention of the poor to the concerns of their souls, and to lead them to that adorable Saviour, who calls himself "The way, the truth, and the life." Of these Visitors, there is a meeting once a month under the superintendence of their Minister, to report what persons they have visited; and to be advised, in case of any difficulty, what is most fitting to be done. At those meetings also the accounts of every district are settled; and the book which contains them is kept open to the inspection of them all[a].]

From this short view of the Institution may be judged,

II. Its great utility—

The words of our text refer to the contributions sent from Macedonia and Achaia to relieve the necessities of the saints at Jerusalem: and they mark with great distinctness the chief excellencies of the Institution before us. Its obvious tendency is to advance,

1. The comfort of the poor—

[The poor in a time of health are happy; because their minds and habits are fitted to their state. But in a time of sickness their situation is truly pitiable; because they are unable to procure those comforts which their necessities require. Their very application for parochial relief sometimes subjects them to unkindness: and those, who have been familiar with them in a season of prosperity, too often neglect them in a time of need[b]. Conceive then at such a season a Visitor coming to them, and not only tendering to them that relief which they could not have obtained from any other source, but expressing the tenderest sympathy with them under their affliction: What a balm must this be to the wounded feelings of the poor sufferer! If the rich, who are accustomed to kindness from their friends, find it doubly acceptable at such a season, what must the poor man feel at the unexpected and unsolicited attentions of a perfect stranger!

But conceive the poor man now for the first time led to call upon his God; now instructed in the knowledge of a Saviour; now blessed with the first dawn of spiritual light, and begotten to a hope full of immortality: Conceive him now saying with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted:" "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have

[a] Of course, this head must vary, according to the institution, in aid of which the sermon is preached.

[b] See Prov. xix. 7.

have I learned thy law:" How altered is his state! how peaceful is his mind! how exceeding joyful is he in all his tribulation!

Know ye then that such effects have frequently arisen from the exertions of those who are engaged in this good work; and it is the manifest tendency of the Institution to produce them. This therefore may well recommend the Institution itself to your support.]

2. The welfare of all engaged in it—

[To enter cordially into a work of this kind is no small exercise of grace: it truly displays "the exceeding grace of God in us:" and where grace is so exercised, it will assuredly be strengthened and confirmed. God has said, that "he who watereth, shall be watered also himself." And we will appeal to all who have ever visited the chambers of the sick, and laboured for the spiritual welfare of their fellow-creatures, whether they have not been richly repaid by the blessing of God poured out upon their own souls? We know assuredly, that in proportion as any have offered unto God these sacrifices of love, they have been made by him to feast upon their own sacrifice.

But further, we are told in our text, that the persons relieved will offer up "their prayers" to God in behalf of those who relieve them: and is this a small benefit? Possibly the prayers may be only devout aspirations to God, such as, "God bless you!" but shall such prayers go forth in vain? If God hears the cries of the injured, and punishes their oppressors[c], will he not hear and answer the prayers of men when offered for their benefactors? No doubt he will; and will recompense into the bosoms of the benevolent every benefit they have conferred.

Nor is it a small benefit to such benevolent persons that their names are respected, and their company desired. True indeed, we are not to engage in such services with a view to the applause of man: but we are not to despise the approbation and love of our fellow-creatures, but rather to accept it as an expression of God's kindness to our souls. See how Job's exertions in this way were recompensed[cc]: and was this a despicable reward? But consider how such benefactors are loved by the objects whom they relieve: "how greatly they are longed after for the exceeding grace of God in them." How do the poor people count the hours, and almost the minutes, when these kind friends are expected to arrive! Truly this is a great honour from the Lord, and an unspeakable comfort to those who have rendered themselves so respected and beloved.]

3. The

[c] Jam. v. 4. [cc] Job. xxix. 11—13.

3. The honour of the Gospel—

[Of this also the text particularly speaks. These kind offices are regarded both by God and man as a "professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ." The Gospel expressly requires these offices of love. "Pure religion," we are told, "is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction[d]: and again it is said, "Bear ye one another's burthens, and so fulfil the law of Christ[e]." When therefore these offices are performed, the Gospel appears, in its true light, a religion of love.

And here we cannot but observe, how such conduct in the professors of the Gospel is calculated to silence all its enemies. Many cry out against the Gospel as inculcating faith only, and leading its advocates to neglect good works. But where shall we find among the enemies of the Gospel such institutions as *these?* where shall we find that a regard for the *souls* of men forms a leading feature in any charity of theirs? It is under the Gospel only that *these* institutions flourish; and no sooner does any one receive "the truth as it is in Jesus," than he delights to aid such institutions to the utmost of his power. Truly this is most honourable to the Gospel: and that which so adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour, must needs be itself worthy of universal support.]

4. The glory of God—

[Doubtless it is not in the power of man to add any thing to the glory of his God. Yet, inasmuch as these institutions lead men to acknowledge the providence of God, and to adore him for his gracious interposition in their behalf, they may be justly said to advance the glory of God. And this view of the subject is repeatedly mentioned both in the text and context[f]. The Visitor may possibly, in the first instance, be regarded as the only source of the benefit conferred: but his instructions soon lead the grateful person to behold the hand of God, and to render thanks to HIM as the true and only source of good. Then the benefactor is viewed in his true light, even like the angel sent by God to deliver Peter from his prison: but God is viewed as "the Author and Giver of the gift." Then "thanksgivings abound to HIM;" and the person who perhaps thought nothing of his God before, now adores him and magnifies him from his inmost soul. This is the only tribute that man can pay to his Maker: but it is "a sacrifice most pleasing unto God."]

CONCLUSION—

[We now call upon you all to adopt the language of our text, and say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" The

[d] Jam. i. 27. [e] Gal. vi. 2. [f] See Ch. viii. 19. & ver. 11.

The true import of these words is not generally understood. It is supposed, that, because our blessed Lord and Saviour calls himself "The gift of God," and is undoubtedly the greatest of all God's gifts to man, the passage must relate to him: but, both from the text and context, it is evident that we must understand it as relating to the alms which were collected for the service of the Church at Jerusalem. Speaking of the part which Titus had taken in this measure, St. Paul says, "Thanks be to God, who put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you[g]:" where it is observable, that he traces the blessing to God as its true Author, and returns thanks to God for it. So in our text he speaks of "Thanksgivings to God" occasioned by it, and "God as glorified for it," and "the exceeding grace of God" as manifested in it. Hence the import of it undeniably is, that "Thanks" should be given by all to God for so "unspeakable a gift."

And truly it is "the gift of God:" it is God alone that has put it into the heart of so many persons to unite in so good a work. It is to his grace alone that we can trace this tender concern for the temporal and eternal welfare of our fellow-creatures. Man, by nature, has it not: and those who are ignorant of the Gospel have it not: they may talk about good works; but this is a work in which they never engage. We must therefore glorify God for it, as being the only true source from whence it proceeds.

And it may well be called an "*unspeakable* gift." It is unspeakable, whether as existing in the Visitors, or as operating on those who are visited. No grace can justly be considered as a light matter, since the smallest portion of it that can exist in the soul is of more value than the whole world. Of what value then must such "*exceeding* grace" be, such grace as most assimilates us to God himself! Was "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" most displayed in this, that "when he was rich, he for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich[h]?" This is the pattern which the Visitors desire to imitate, so far at least as, by the most self-denying offices of love, to contribute to the utmost of their power to the happiness of their afflicted brethren.

If we look at the effects which have followed from their exertions, these are "unspeakable" indeed: for, in addition to the temporal comfort administered to Christ himself in many of his poor members[i], I doubt not but that there are at this very hour before the throne of God several, whose first thoughts about religion originated altogether in the instructions received from this Society. Had there been but *one* soul brought out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel by means of this Institution, the labours of all connected

[g] Ch. viii. 16. [h] Ch. viii. 9. [i] Matt. xxv. 40.

nected with it would have been richly recompensed: but we say again, that *several*, we doubt not, will have to bless God for it to all eternity.

Let all then give thanks to God that such an Institution exists; and let all contribute liberally to its support ——— We beg to remind you all, that the Contributors, no less than the Visitors, are accessary to all the good that is done by it; and may expect a blessing on their own souls: and we close our subject with that admonition of the Apostle, "He who soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully[k]."]

[k] ver. 6.

DCCCCXCVIII.

EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL.

2 Cor. x. 3—5. *Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

EVERY thing, however good, may be made to appear in a disadvantageous light, if we choose to put a perverse construction upon it: and the more diligent any person is in approving himself to God, the more must he expect to suffer from misrepresentation and calumny. His humility will be called superstition; his zeal, ostentation; his devotion, enthusiasm; and his whole deportment, hypocrisy. No man ever laboured to do what was right more than the apostle Paul; yet no man was ever more calumniated. There was no self-denial which he did not exercise, no suffering which he did not cheerfully endure, for the good of others: yet through the artifices of false teachers, who sought to establish their own influence on the ruins of his, every thing he did became to him an occasion of reproach. There were great disorders in the Corinthian Church, which he sought to rectify. He in the first instance adopted the mildest methods: when these were ineffectual, he

he threatened to exert his Apostolic authority: when still he could not prevail, he was extremely averse to use the necessary severity; and forbore to do it, in hopes that his lenity might conciliate their regards, and reduce them to a willing obedience. But they construed all this change of conduct as the result of guile, or timidity. They considered him as influenced by a view to his own carnal interests, and as being unworthy of their respect in proportion as he strove to merit it. Of this he complains in the passage before us. He assures his adversaries that, though like other men he was still encompassed with infirmities, he was not actuated by any considerations of ease, or honour, or interest, but was intent on mortifying every evil thought in himself, as well as of checking it in them: and that, as he was impelled by a sense of duty in the whole of his conduct towards them, so, if his present kind intreaties should be without effect, he was ready and determined to exert his Apostolic authority in casting out of the Church all obstinate offenders, and in inflicting on them also, by his miraculous powers, some heavy judgment.

This seems to be the import of the text as it stands connected with the context. But if we divest it of the peculiarities arising from the occasion, we shall find in it a summary view of the effects produced by the Gospel in the Apostle's own mind, and, through his instrumentality, on the minds of others also. In discoursing upon it we shall be led to shew,

I. The opposition which sinners make to God—

We might here lay open the actions of men, and shew their contrariety to the commands of God. But the text speaks of "imaginations and of high things which exalt themselves," not merely against the authority, but "even against the knowledge, of God." We must therefore mark the rebellion of men as it shews itself in their "*thoughts*" which serve as "strong-holds" in which they are intrenched and fortified, and by means of which they exclude God from their hearts.

They

They fortify themselves then,

1. By proud thoughts—

[It is scarcely credible that such an insect as man should exalt himself with such impious presumption in the presence of his God. If we assert the authority of God, and vindicate his claim to their hearts, they reply, like Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord; neither will I obey his voice[a]."]

2. By unbelieving thoughts—

[We declare what will certainly be the issue of the contest; and that, if they will not bow to the sceptre of his grace, they shall be broken in pieces with a rod of iron[b]: and that, if they will not have Christ to reign over them, he will call forth his executioners to slay them before him[c]. But not one word of this will they believe. They deny that God will ever execute his threatenings, or that they have any thing to fear at his hands[d].]

3. By worldly thoughts—

[When we summon them to surrender themselves up to God, they tell us, that at some more convenient season they may listen to us; but at present they are so occupied with the cares or pleasures of life, they cannot find leisure for such concerns as these. To all our pressing invitations, they either answer, more civilly, "I pray thee have me excused," or, more rudely, "I cannot come[e]."]

4. By self-righteous thoughts—

[When they are driven, as it were, from their out-posts, they raise interior fortifications with great zeal and industry: they encompass themselves with "works of righteousness," and there insist upon stipulations and agreements with God. They will pay him such a tribute; they will perform such services; they will surrender up a portion of their hearts, provided their old friends and allies may be permitted to remain unmolested in the remainder. The terms of the Gospel are too humiliating for them: and rather than they will come like Benhadad, trusting solely on the mercy of the king of Israel[f], they will die in the breach, and be buried in the ruins of their citadel.]

5. By desponding thoughts—

[God's entrance into the heart is not unfrequently obstructed

[a] Exod. v. 2. See also Ps. xii. 4. & Jer. xliv. 16.
[b] Ps. ii. 9.
[c] Luke xix. 27.
[d] Ps. xciv. 7. with Mal. ii. 17.
[e] Luke xiv. 18—20.
[f] 2 Kin. xx. 31, 32.

structed by these, as much as by any other, thoughts whatever. And it is surprising to see with what obstinacy they are defended. Sinners will even bring Scripture itself to support them against God, and to justify their rejection of his proffered mercy. They are as studious to persuade themselves that "there is no hope" for them, as once they were to assure themselves that there was no ground for fear[g].]

But impregnable as these "strong-holds" appear, God can "cast them down." To evince this, we proceed to shew,

II. The means by which God overcomes them—

God in this warfare does not make use of "carnal weapons"—

[*The sword of the civil Magistrate* is not wanted in it. It may indeed be properly used to suppress any evils which injure society, and to protect the godly in the free enjoyment of religious liberty[h]: But it must not be put forth to propagate the truth[hh]. Let Mahometans bathe their swords in blood, and Papists kindle their fires, to make proselytes to their religion; but God abhors such measures; and has declared, that "they who take the sword shall perish with the sword[i]."

Neither are his servants to call in *artifice* to their aid. They are indeed, in some sense, to "become all things to all men, that by all means they may save some[k]:" but they are not to make any sinful compliances: they are to stand upon their own ground: they must "have their conversation in the world, not with fleshly wisdom, but with simplicity and godly sincerity[l];" they must not attempt to exercise craft, or to "catch men by guile[m];" but, "renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty, they must commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God[n]."

Nor is *oratory* of any use in this warfare. St. Paul was qualified beyond most to fight with this weapon, if he had judged it expedient: but he laid it aside as an incumbrance: he knew that, instead of advancing the interests of his Lord, it would "render the cross of Christ of none effect[o]:" and therefore he determined to "preach, not with the enticing words of man's wisdom[p]," or "in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in those only which the Holy Ghost teacheth[q]."]

That

[g] Ezek. xxxvii. 11. Jer. ii. 25. [h] Rom. xiii. 3, 4. [hh] Zech. iv. 6.
[i] Matt. xxvi. 52. [k] 1 Cor. ix. 22. [l] 2 Cor. i. 12.
[m] 2 Cor. xii. 16. [n] 2 Cor. iv. 2. [o] 1 Cor. i. 17.
[p] 1 Cor. ii. 4. [q] 1 Cor. ii. 13.

That which he renders effectual, is the simple preaching of the Gospel—

[The law is usually that which first shakes the foundations of the citadel, and batters down the fortifications with which it was encompassed: yea, the Gospel itself also is at first alarming, because it proposes a remedy to persons perishing in their sins, and consequently apprises them of their danger, which they were not before aware of. But when it has convinced them of their guilt and misery, then it speaks peace unto their souls; and sweetly constrains them to yield up themselves unreservedly to God, as their reconciled God and Saviour[r]———

Not that it has this power in itself: it is in itself as weak as was the sound of rams' horns which cast down the walls of Jericho[s]: but it is "mighty through God;" and, when accompanied by the operations of his Spirit, it compels the stoutest rebel to deliver up the keys of his citadel, and surrender at discretion.]

The victories gained by this are perfect and complete—

[The victories obtained by carnal weapons, may be followed by the subjugation of the vanquished people: but no conqueror could expect his newly acquired subjects to become instantly his active and faithful allies. Yet this invariably follows the triumphs of the Gospel: the vanquished sinner begins to fight as zealously for God as ever he fought against him. Moreover, as his *thoughts* and *imaginations* were the strong-holds and fortifications whereby he maintained his stand against God, so now they are employed in his service, and are instrumental in repelling all the attacks of his enemies: "they are brought, not only into captivity, but also into obedience to Christ."

Now he entertains *humble* thoughts, abhorring himself for ever rebelling against so gracious a God and Saviour; and detesting the base servitude to which he submitted under the government of Satan. These, in proportion as they are entertained, form a very strong rampart around his soul.

Now he cherishes also *jealous* thoughts, aware of the subtilty of his great adversary, and of the traitors which yet remain within his own bosom. He stands upon his watch-tower, and guards every avenue whereby his enemy may again approach to hurt him.

Now also he raises up *grateful* thoughts, magnifying and adoring that love wherewith his blessed Lord has loved him, and that grace whereby his God and Father has distinguished him.

[r] 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. [s] Josh. vi. 20.

him[t]. These form a bulwark that may defy all the confederate hosts of earth and hell.

Now moreover he forms *resolute* thoughts. He is menaced by an ungodly world; but he sets them all at defiance. Is he told that he shall be imprisoned and put to death for his adherence to Christ? He answers, "none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself[u];" "I am willing not only to be bound, but also to die for my Lord's sake[x]." "Yea, if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all, and desire that you also will joy and rejoice with me[y]."

In short, he labours that "*every* thought" which can give advantage to the enemy, may be "cast down," and *every* thought which can maintain the authority and promote the honour of God, may be established in the soul: so entirely does Christ overcome the strong man, and convert to his own use all his spoils[z].]

We may LEARN from hence,

1. How to judge of our conversion—

[Our words or actions are a very inadequate criterion whereby to judge: for, though they must of necessity be good if we are converted, and a want of piety in them will incontestibly prove us unconverted, yet there may be nothing manifestly exceptionable in them, while we are still ignorant of Christ and of his salvation. But the thoughts will form an infallible rule of judgment. "As a man thinketh in his heart, says Solomon, so is he[a]." Examine therefore whether proud, unbelieving, worldly, self-righteous, and desponding thoughts are subdued within you; and whether humble, jealous, grateful, and resolute thoughts are in habitual exercise. Far be it from us to say, that men are not to employ their thoughts about worldly things; for their duties in social life absolutely require that they should do so: but, to whatever point our thoughts lead us when they are wholly unconfined, that will shew the real disposition of our minds; if we are carnal and worldly, our thoughts will be running out after things of a carnal and worldly nature: if, on the contrary, we are spiritual, then will our thoughts, which are known to God only, be spiritual and heavenly.]

2. How to act when we are converted—

[What is spoken proverbially in reference to the expenditure of money, may very fitly be applied to this subject; "Take care of little things; and great ones will take care of themselves." Be attentive to your thoughts; and we shall have

[t] 1 John iii. 1. [u] Acts xx. 24. [x] Acts xxi. 13.
[y] Phil. ii. 17, 18. [z] Luke xi. 21, 22. [a] Prov. xxiii. 7.

have no fear about your actions. There is not any thing done, but it has been previously transacted in the thoughts. The heart is the womb in which every thing is first conceived, whether it be good or evil[b]. Out of the abundance that is there, will the mouth speak, and the members act[c]. Let us then attend to the advice of Solomon, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life[d]:" Let us endeavour to train the thoughts for God. Let us not suffer them to roam without notice; but frequently arrest them, and inquire into their nature and tendency. Then shall we become ornaments to our holy profession, and acquire an increasing meetness for heaven, where "EVERY" thought will indeed be captivated to the obedience and enjoyment of Christ.]

[b] Jam. 1. 15. [c] Matt. xii. 34, 35. [d] Prov. iv. 23.

DCCCCXCIX.

THE FOLLY OF PRIDE AND BOASTING.

2 Cor. x. 18. *Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.*

ONE would be ready to suppose, that the more any person excelled in every thing that was good, the more he would be filled with self-complacency; and that the less holy any person was, the more he would be humbled under a sense of his vileness. But observation and experience attest that the very reverse of this is true. The godly do indeed enjoy the testimony of a good conscience; but they are far from boasting of their own superior worth; they rather "prefer others in honour before themselves," and account themselves "less than the least of all saints:" But formalists and hypocrites are ever ready to commend themselves on account of their fancied excellencies, and to assume a credit which does not belong to them.

There were at Corinth some of this description—some conceited teachers, who had entered into the Apostle's labours, and were endeavouring to advance their own influence in the Church by weakening and subverting his. To put the Corinthians on their guard against them, St. Paul shews them how different had been his conduct from that of these vain-glorious men: he had brought the Gospel to those

those regions where it had never been heard before; whereas they were "boasting in another man's line of things made ready to their hand:" he had moved in the sphere appointed him by God; they were going beside and beyond the line marked out for them: he had sought only the glory of the Lord; while they were puffed up with pride, and seeking their own glory. He then lays down a rule, applicable indeed to these teachers in the first instance, but equally proper for us also. That "not they who commend themselves will be approved, but those whom the Lord commendeth."

In discoursing on these words we shall shew,

I. From whence self-approbation arises—

The hearts of men are by nature proud: and their pride finds abundant scope for exercise,

1. From their over-rating the quality of their actions—

[If what they do *appears* to be good, they are not strict in inquiring whether it be really so: they do not wish to detect those deficiencies which might render them dissatisfied with themselves. They do not examine *the principle* from which their actions flow, or *the manner* in which they are performed, or *the end* for which they are done: whereas these are the things which alone can determine the real quality of their actions. They take for granted that all is right, because they see nothing wrong; and thus are filled with self-admiration and self-complacency, when, if they formed a proper estimate of their conduct, they would rather be filled with shame and self-abasement.]

2. From their judging of them by an erroneous standard—

[Though men are not nice and scrupulous in weighing their actions, they involuntarily and imperceptibly judge of them by some standard. Now the standard by which they try them, is that of popular opinion, and general practice: and whatever stands this test, they conclude to be deserving of praise. They never think of weighing themselves in the balance of the sanctuary: the popular scale is more suited to their minds: that is not turned by small matters: it is so favourably constructed that a small weight of virtue will overbalance a heavy load of iniquity; and the many grains of allowance thrown into it are almost sure to make it preponderate

rate in their favour. No wonder then that they applaud themselves, when, if they took the word of God as their standard, they would find cause for nothing but humiliation and contrition.]

3. From their ascribing them to a wrong cause—

[Because they are free agents in all that they do, they suppose that the merit of every good action must belong to them. But they forget that "God is the sole author of every good and perfect gift;" that it is "he who of his own good pleasure gives us both to will and to do:" and that consequently all the honour is due to him alone. Granting then that their actions were really as excellent as their overweening conceit would paint them, yet they would have no ground for self-commendation. The more they did for God, the more they would be indebted to God; by whose agency alone they were either inclined, or empowered, to do any thing that was good. But when they leave God out of their thoughts, and ascribe their virtues to their own will and power, they must of necessity contract habits of self-preference and self-esteem.]

4. From their overlooking their defects—

[The proud and vain-glorious reflect only on what they do; and never think at all of what they leave undone, or of the deficiences which are found in their very best actions. They perform one duty perhaps, and neglect many. They attend to some injunction of the second table, but forget entirely the precepts contained in the first. They mark their observance of the letter of a command, but quite overlook their inattention to its spirit. They will have no more gods than one: but they will not "love that God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength." They will "draw nigh to God with their lips," but will not inquire whether they have "worshipped him in spirit and in truth." What can we expect from such partial views of their conduct, but that they will vaunt and boast themselves, as if they were worthy of the highest commendation?]

Having traced the self-applause of men to its true source; we proceed to shew,

II. The folly and danger of it—

To illustrate this, let two things be considered:

1. God will not regulate his judgment by theirs—

[Man is often influenced by the opinions of his fellow-creatures; and it is proper that he should be so; because others may have more accurate information than he, or be more

more capable of forming a just conclusion from the premises before him. But "unto God all things are naked and open:" However specious any appearances may be, he cannot be deceived: He will "lay righteousness as a line or plummet" to the souls of men, and thereby mark the smallest deviations from perfect rectitude. In vain will the boaster vaunt before him; for he will with one single interrogation confound him utterly, and lay him in the dust. In vain will the self-deceiver bring forward in his defence the good actions that he has done; for his God and Judge will indignantly dismiss him as unworthy of the smallest regard[a]. To have the approbation of men will avail him nothing: for "God will not judge according to appearance, but will judge righteous judgment:" "he will shew, that many things which are highly esteemed among men, are an abomination in his sight[b]:" and, when he passes sentence on them, he will "be justified in his saying, and clear when he judgeth[c]."]

2. Instead of sanctioning, he will reprove, their conceit—

[Nothing is more odious in the sight of God than pride; "the proud in heart, we are told, are an abomination to the Lord[d]." Indeed "pride was not made for man:" it assimilates us, as much as any thing can do, to the Devil himself: and will certainly bring us into the same condemnation with him[e]. Our own high opinion of ourselves will have an effect directly opposite to that which we wish. It will cause our God to "resist[f]," abase[g], and utterly destroy us[h].

We need go no further to prove that men, "measuring themselves by themselvs, and comparing themselves among themselves, *are not wise*[i]."]

That we may be preserved from this most destructive, we will point out,

III. The most effectual, antidotes—

1. Study the holy law of God—

[That is the only true standard of good and evil: and "by that is the knowledge of sin." That reaches to the inmost thoughts and dispositions, as well as to the outward acts.—It was by a view of that, as extending to every desire of the soul, that Paul was made to feel himself a guilty and undone sinner[k]: and that once understood, will bring all of us into the dust before God.]

2. Watch

[a] Matt. vii. 21—23.
[b] Luke xvi. 15.
[c] Ps. li. 4.
[d] Prov. xvi. 5.
[e] 1 Tim. iii. 6.
[f] Jam. iv. 6.
[g] Dan. iv. 30—32, 37.
[h] Isai. x. 12—16. with Luke xviii. 14.
[i] ver. 12.
[k] Rom. vii. 9.

2. Watch the motions of your own heart—

[Little do we suspect how much evil we should discover, if we were to mark the motives and principles by which we are actuated. Even when we are influenced by a good principle in the first instance, Satan will find some occasion to sow tares with the wheat, and to defile our very best actions. Let us then exercise a holy jealousy over ourselves: let us not be too confident, even when we are most unconscious of any secret evil[1]: let us especially be on our guard against every self-complacent thought: and let us abase ourselves that we may be exalted of our God.]

3. Bear in mind the strictness of the scrutiny in the day of judgment—

[God "weigheth," not our actions only, but "our spirits:" there is not a thought of our hearts that is not open to his all-seeing eye. He views at once the rule, and the observance of it; and every deviation from the line of absolute perfection is marked by him. True indeed it is, that whilst we are looking to the blood of Christ to cleanse us from our secret faults, and to the Spirit of Christ to perfect in us his good work, God will not "be extreme to mark what is done amiss:" but, if we harbour any secret lust, or indulge any unhallowed principle, our God will search it out, and judge us according to it[m]. Our self-commendation will then avail us nothing; but we shall stand or fall according to the decision of an omniscient and unerring Judge.]

[1] 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. [m] ib. ver. 5.

M.

GODLY JEALOUSY THE DUTY OF MINISTERS.

2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. *I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

TO boast of ourselves is a mark of a weak and foolish mind. Yet there are occasions whereon it may be necessary, particularly where the welfare of the Church of God is concerned. It would have ill become the Apostle to sit down in silence under all the

the calumnies that were cast upon him as a designing and deceitful man, who sought only his own glory, whilst he was assuming a character which did not properly belong to him. In vindication of himself, he appeals to the plain, visible, acknowledged testimonies which God had given in his favour; which far exceeded any which his opponents could produce, and equalled any which had ever been given to "the very chiefest Apostles."—At the same time he intreats the Corinthians to "bear with his folly" in mentioning these things, since it was not for his own sake, but for theirs, that he adverted to them.

Now the jealousy which he felt for the saints at Corinth is precisely such as every Minister should feel for his people, exposed as they are to temptations on every side: and that it may be seen how necessary such a jealousy is, we shall shew,

I. In what near relation Believers stand to Christ—

They are espoused to Christ—

[Christ is the Head and Husband of his Church. Under this character he is described by the prophet Isaiah[a]: it is also given him in the Gospel[b]: and the apostle Paul largely and repeatedly assigns it to him[c]. In the book of Revelations also the Church is expressly represented as "the Wife of the Lamb[d]."

Truly, if it had not been so plainly revealed, we could not have dared to entertain such a thought in our minds. That sinners, so guilty, so polluted as we are, should be admitted into so near and so endearing a relation to our incarnate God; how wonderful! how surpassing all knowledge, and all conception! Yet so it is: and both the Church at large, and every member of the Church, is a partaker of this honour.]

Into this relation they are brought by the Ministry of the Gospel—

[The Apostle says, "I have espoused you to one husband." Ministers may not unfitly be compared to Abraham's servant, who was sent forth to seek a wife for his master's son. They have received a commission from their Lord and Master: they make known to the children of men the excellencies of him in whose name they come: they look to God for the success of their labours: and by their means he works, "making

[a] Isai. liv. 5. [b] John iii. 29.
[c] Rom. vii. 4. Eph. v. 32. [d] Rev. xix. 7.

"making persons willing in the day of his power." Sinners thus wrought upon agree to take the Lord Jesus Christ as their Husband; and by their union with him they hope henceforth to "bring forth fruit unto God." In him they see all that they can possibly desire; and on him they rely for the communication of it to their souls: they take him as their "wisdom, their righteousness, their sanctification, and redemption;" and they glory in him, even in him alone. Having thus accepted Christ for their all, they make a covenant with him, "a perpetual covenant not to be forgotten[e];" and they consecrate to him all that they are, and all that they have, to be disposed of from henceforth as his property according to his sovereign will and pleasure. They pledge themselves henceforth through grace to be entirely "for the Lord, and not for another[f];" and never more to yield their affections to any but him. This surrender the Lord Jesus Christ accepts; and to every one by whom it is made, he commissions his servants to proclaim in his name, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies; I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness! and thou shalt know the Lord[g]."]

But whilst on the one hand we contemplate their privileges, we must on the other hand consider,

II. The danger to which they are exposed—

It is not to be supposed that he who ruined their First Parents in Paradise, will leave them in the quiet possession of this high honour: No: as he envied the happiness of man in innocence, and never rested till he had robbed him of it, so he envies all who are brought into this near relation to the Lord Jesus, and never ceases from his efforts to deprive them of it.

The state which becomes those who are thus espoused to Christ, is that of perfect simplicity—

[A person, espoused to a fellow-creature only, ought to possess a simplicity of mind towards him: she should have no interest, no desire, no wish distinct from his. Thus there should be a singleness of eye in all who are united in these holy bonds to our Lord Jesus Christ. There should be no dependence on any thing but on him alone. The constant habit of the Believer's mind must be, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Nor must the betrothed person

[e] Jer. l. 5. [f] Hos. iii. 3. [g] Hos. ii. 19, 20.

son indulge a wish after any one but him to whom she is espoused: she must "forget her own people and her father's house, if she would have her Lord to find pleasure in her beauty[h]." She must possess also a modest, humble, child-like spirit, free from all pride, conceit, and vain-glory. In a word, she must be wholly his, in body, soul, and spirit; "an Israelite indeed, and without guile."]

But from this state Satan is ever striving to divert us—

[Innumerable emissaries has he at his command ready to take advantage of us. Many even of our fellow-creatures are used by him as his instruments: many who are, in fact, no other than "false apostles and deceitful workers," under his influence transform themselves into "apostles of Christ," even as that wicked fiend himself assumes the semblance of "an angel of light[i]." They will profess a great regard for truth, and under that garb will endeavour to commend their own erroneous principles. Under a profession of inculcating sublimer views of the Gospel, they will sap its very foundations, or build a superstructure altogether adverse to it, relaxing the obligations of the law, under a pretence of enhancing the excellency of the Gospel: and, as sure as any embrace their pernicious tenets, they are despoiled of all virgin modesty, and puffed up with pride and self-conceit. The same kind of artifices which Satan used in tempting Eve, he still makes use of by other serpents than he then inspired. He suggests the superior wisdom that will be acquired by embracing this or that dogma; and the gratification that will be derived from a compliance with such or such a temptation. He calls in question the import of such Divine declarations as militate against his views, or at least the danger of acting in opposition to them: and by these devices he beguiles many to their everlasting ruin.]

Persons so tempted are generally unconscious of their danger: and hence arises,

III. The duty of those to whom God has committed the oversight of them—

The work of a Minister is but just begun when he has been the means of bringing any soul to Christ: he has yet to watch over that soul, and to prepare it and make it ready for its destined honours.

At a period yet future is the servant to present the bride to her Lord and husband—

[Even

[h] Ps. xlv. 10—11. [i] ver. 13—15.

[Even the horrid and disgusting offices performed for the virgins who were to be presented to king Ahasuerus, may, when divested of the sensuality connected with them, serve to illustrate the purification necessary for every Member of the Christian Church. In the great day of the Lord Jesus we are to present to him our every convert "as a chaste virgin." Yea, the Lord Jesus Christ himself is now by his word and Spirit preparing the Church, "that he may then present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it may be holy and without blemish[k]." If she be not made ready for him, and "clothed in fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints[l]," she can never be acknowledged as his bride. Any fundamental error in faith, or any allowed deviation from his law in practice, will entirely make void the covenant entered into at the espousals, and will cut her off from any hope of that felicity after which she aspires: and thus will all the Minister's "labour prove in vain[m]."]

Till that period arrive, he must be jealous over her with a godly jealousy—

[If he see any declension from the simplicity that is in Christ, he must instantly raise his warning voice. If he see only a device of Satan whereby her piety may be endangered, and her mind may be in any respect corrupted, he must instantly put her on her guard. He is not to wink at any thing whether in doctrine or practice, that is contrary to the mind of God. If there be only a secret leaning towards any thing that is wrong, he must with all the solicitude of the tenderest parent point out the snare that Satan is laying for her feet. Her Divine Husband is "a jealous God:" and a corresponding jealousy in his Ministers must be ever awake to the discernment of incipient danger, and the correction of the slightest error. This is "a godly jealousy:" it is the highest possible expression of love: and the Minister who with most fidelity and affection discharges this duty, most approves himself to God, and displays the most valuable friendship towards man: "he watches for souls, as one that must give account."]

ADDRESS,

1. Those who have given occasion for jealousy—

[Is it asked, Who are they? I answer, Those who have either declined in their love to Christ, or have not made their profiting to appear. What would any of you feel towards an object, who, after having solemnly betrothed herself to you, and once professed towards you the most ardent affection, had

[k] Eph. v. 25—27. [l] Rev. xix. 8. [m] Gal. iv. 11.

had ceased to delight in your society, or shewed, that her more intimate acquaintance with you produced no increase of attachment towards you? Would your mind be easy? Would you be satisfied with such equivocal professions of regard? What then must the Lord Jesus Christ feel, and what should your Ministers feel, when your whole spirit and conduct give so much reason for doubt and fear? They must be jealous; they ought to be jealous: and towards all who come under this character we must "change our voice." We do truly "stand in doubt of" such: and we are constrained to "travail in birth with them, as it were, a second time until Christ be formed in them[n]." "Look well to yourselves, my Brethren, that ye lose not the things that ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward:" for, if ye draw back from the Lord Jesus Christ either in heart or life, "his soul shall have no pleasure in you[o]."]

2. Those in whom no visible occasion of jealousy exists—

[We bless our God who has kept you thus far faithful to your engagements. Truly, "he who hath established you in the midst of such manifold temptations is God."——— But still, though *we* have no occasion to be jealous over you, it becomes you to be jealous over yourselves with a godly jealousy. For who can tell what a day or an hour may bring forth? David, when walking on the top of his house, little thought what a snare Satan had laid for him: and you little know how sorely he may thrust at you before another day has passed over your heads. "Be not high-minded, but fear." "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Take notice from time to time how your minds stand affected to the Lord Jesus Christ: Mariners are often forced out of their track by currents, and never discover their deviations till they have made their observations afresh: make your observations then: Do you delight more in secret communion with Christ? Do you think less of every sacrifice you are called to make for him? Is it more and more the one endeavour of your soul to please him? And are you looking forward with increasing desire for that day when you shall be intimately and indissolubly united to him, and spend an eternity in the fruition of his love? By such marks as these you may judge of your own state, and acquire a confidence in relation to his judgment also. Leave nothing in suspense. Give yourselves to him: walk with him: cleave to him with full purpose of heart: and "be diligent that ye may at last be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless[p]."

And

[n] Gal. iv. 19, 20. [o] Heb. x. 38. [p] 2 Pet. iii. 14, 17.

And now to his holy keeping we commend you; even to him, "who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen[q]."]

[q] Jude 24.

MI.

ST. PAUL'S ZEAL ILLUSTRATED AND IMPROVED.

2 Cor. xi. 23—29. *Are they ministers? (I speak as a fool;) I am more: in labours, more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep: in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?*

THE people of the world are in the habit of representing religious persons as defective in every mental attainment, and negligent in the discharge of every social duty: and it becomes Christians not only to cut off all occasion for such reproach, but so to conduct themselves as to be able to appeal to all who know them, that they are in no respect below any other people who are similarly circumstanced with themselves. As St. Paul, when his adversaries sought to detract from his character, silenced them by this challenge, "Whereinsoever any is bold, I am bold also: are they Hebrews? so am I: are they Israelites? so am I: are they the seed of Abraham? so am I:" so ought Christians in every department of life to be able to challenge competition with other men, and boldly to say, 'Are they modest, prudent, kind, faithful, diligent? so am I.' This they should be able to do in reference to all heathen virtues, and worldly attainments. But in relation to every thing

of

of a spiritual nature, the Christian should so far excel, that no worldly person should be able to come near him. Our blessed Lord intimates this in the question which he puts to us; "What do ye more than others?" We ought to do more than any other people in the world either do or can do; and, like the Apostle in our text, we should be able to enumerate many things, in which our adversaries, even the best of them, can bear no competition with us.

It is well for the Church of God that St. Paul was so calumniated by his enemies: for, if he had not been so traduced, he never would have recorded the extent of his labours, respecting which, from the brief history of them in the Acts of the Apostles, we should not have formed any adequate conception. True it is, indeed, that he again and again acknowledges, that, if not so compelled to declare the truth, he would have been a fool for boasting in this manner: and we too shall be guilty of the most egregious folly, if we without necessity proclaim our own goodness; but still, I say again, we should be inferior to the world in nothing that pertains to this life, and superior to them in every thing that pertains to the life to come.

From this account, which the Apostle gives of his own labours, we shall take occasion,

I. To place them more distinctly before you—

Of course, it is only a cursory notice that we can take of them: and indeed it is the accumulated mass, rather than any minute particulars, which will best answer our end in this discourse. Yet, that we may have something of a distinct view of his labours, let us notice,

1. His sufferings—

[St. Paul, at his conversion, had been told by the Saviour "what great things he should suffer for his Master's sake:" and truly they were great, greater far than those which fell to the share of any other Apostle. He was "in stripes above measure," being five times scourged by the Jews, to the utmost extremity that their law allowed; and thrice by the Romans, though in direct opposition to the Roman

Roman law. "In prisons" all the Apostles had been; but not so frequently as he. So "often was he in deaths," that he felt himself "standing in jeopardy every hour," and could appeal to God that "he died daily[a]." Thrice did he suffer shipwreck: and on one of those occasions he floated on a piece of the wreck "a day and a night," every moment in danger of being consigned to a watery grave. On one occasion he was stoned (at Lystra), and actually left for dead: and doubtless he would have died, if God had not, by a miraculous power, raised him up again, and restored him to the use of his limbs[b].

What patience, what resignation, what fortitude, must the Apostle have possessed, when he could persevere in the midst of such continued and severe trials as these! And how strange does it appear, that "in every place such bonds and such afflictions should await" such a man as he; whose only fault was, that he loved his God and Saviour, and loved his fellow-creatures too even beyond his own life! But so it was; and so it will be, as long as ungodly men shall have it in their power to put forth into exercise their enmity against God: and, in proportion as any man resembles Paul in his zeal for Christ, and in his love to men, he will meet with the very same treatment that the Apostle did: and if he be not persecuted unto death, as Paul was, he will be indebted for his protection, not to the abated hostility of men, but to the laws of the land in which he dwells.]

2. His dangers—

[These were incessant, wherever he moved. Sometimes he was in peril "by waters," that is by rivers, which he was obliged to ford, or more probably by land floods, which he could neither foresee nor escape: sometimes by robbers, who, conceiving him to be carrying money with him from one Church to another, lay in wait to plunder him. Sometimes "by his own countrymen," who were incensed against him for going to the Gentiles: and at other times "by the heathen," who were indignant at his endeavours to overthrow idolatry. "In the city," he was beset by enraged mobs; "in the wilderness," by ravenous beasts; and, "in the sea," by frequent tempests, or by pirates, more to be dreaded than death itself.

But who would have thought that persons professing love to Christ should be found adverse to him; and that he should be in as much danger from their envy and jealousy, their subtlety and malignity, as from the more open assaults of professed

[a] 1 Cor. xv. 30. 31.

[b] All these were prior to their sufferings recorded in the latter part of the Acts of the Apostles.

professed enemies! Yet amidst his other perils he mentions those in which he was "among false brethren," who sought by misrepresentations to subvert his influence, and by treachery to destroy his life. Alas! alas! that such impiety should ever be concealed under a cloke of zeal for Christ! Yet the faithful Minister shall find that such monsters do exist; and that there are yet in the Church, no less than in the Apostolic age, "wolves in sheep's clothing," who, if only they can find opportunity to exercise their predominant dispositions, will tear in pieces the Church, and spare neither the Shepherd nor the sheep[c].]

3. His privations—

[Amidst all his labours, he was often destitute of the comforts, yea, and of the common necessaries, of life; so that, in addition to all the weariness and painfulness of his exertions, he was exposed to "hunger and thirst, and cold and nakedness," not having clothing to protect him from the inclemencies of the weather, nor food to sustain his feeble body. And, as if all these privations were not sufficient, he often added to them by voluntary fastings, and by a sacrifice of needful sleep, that so he might be able to support himself without being burthensome to any, and make himself an example to those who accused him of seeking only his temporal advancement.

How lightly and thoughtlessly do we read this account, as though there were nothing very extraordinary in it! But if we had only to spend one single week in such trials as his, we should soon see what astonishing grace he must have had, that could enable him to bear them for a series of years, and even to "take pleasure in them," if only his Lord and Saviour might be glorified by means of them[d]!]

4. His cares—

[These, under such circumstances, were truly overwhelming. The Churches every where, whether planted by him or not, looked to him for guidance and direction in all their difficulties: so that there was a weight upon his mind sufficient to depress any one who did not feel his consolations and supports. The trials of Moses being great, seventy persons were appointed to bear the burthen with him. But Paul had to bear his burthens all alone. He was the Referee of all; the Counsellor of all; the Director of all. Nor did he attend merely to the general concerns of all the Churches: no; he bore in mind the case of every individual that was brought before him, and laboured as much for the benefit of each, as if he had no other object to engage his mind. For this

[c] Acts xx. 29. [d] ver. 30. with 2 Cor. xii. 10.

this he could appeal to the Corinthians themselves; "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" If any, through prejudice, or ignorance of Christian liberty, or through any other cause, were weak, he sympathized with them, and accommodated himself to their feeble state, and laboured by all possible means to comfort and encourage them. In like manner, if any were stumbled either by the artifices of false teachers, or the violence of persecution, he "burned" with an ardent desire to restore their minds, and to establish their hearts.]

Such was the life of that holy man; and such were the labours in which it was continually occupied. We will now endeavour,

II. To suggest such considerations as obviously arise from them—

But where shall we begin? or, once begun, where shall we end? We must of necessity confine ourselves to a few which are of most general utility. Let us see then in these labours of his,

1. The incalculable value of the soul—

[If we were to judge by the conduct of all around us, we should suppose that the soul were of no value: for the generality of men pay no more attention to their souls than if there were no future state of existence: And of those who profess to care for their souls, how few labour for their welfare with becoming zeal! If they be called upon to bear some reproach, or to sustain some temporal loss, they are ready to draw back, as though the interests of their souls were not worth the sacrifice. They are more terrified at the sneers of a fellow-creature, than at the threatenings of their God; and more desirous of the applause of man, than of the approbation of their Judge. But look at the apostle Paul: Did he think so lightly of immortal souls? Would he have laboured and suffered so much for them, if they were of no more value than men in general account them? Surely, either he was wrong, or we; if the souls of men deserved no more attention than is usually paid to them, he was a foolish and mad enthusiast: but if we may at all estimate their value by his labours for them, then are the world mad, in paying so much attention to worthless vanities, and in so little regarding what is of more value than the whole world. O ye careless ones, whatever be your rank or age, let me expostulate with you on your more than brutish folly———]

2. The vast importance of the Gospel—

[When

[When we urge on men the necessity of believing in Christ, and of living altogether by faith on him, they reply that there is no need of that entire surrender of ourselves to Christ; and that to condemn all who will not comply with such requisitions is uncharitable in the extreme. When we urge them also to use all possible means for the conversion of the heathen, they tell us that we may safely leave them to their respective creeds; and that God is too merciful ever to condemn them. But, if this be true, how can we account for the conduct of the Apostle? Why did he labour so for the conversion of Jews or Gentiles, if either Jews or Gentiles could be saved in any other way than through faith in Christ? *Some* labours and *some* sufferings we may suppose a man to undergo for the sake of proselyting others to his own opinions; but who would endure all that Paul endured, and *that* too so continually, and for so long a series of years, if he had not known that the everlasting welfare of men depended on their acceptance or rejection of his message? Know ye then that the Record of God, even that record which says, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; he that hath the Son, hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life;" that record, I say, is true: and just so many of you as are living simply by faith on Christ, and receiving every thing out of his fulness, are in a state of salvation: but every other person without exception is "under condemnation, and the wrath of God abideth on him."

And here let me caution those who are convinced of this truth, to hold it fast and glory in it, though earth and hell should conspire to turn them from it: for if the Apostles laboured so much and endured so much to impart the knowledge of it to others, much more should we be in earnest to secure an interest in it for ourselves ———]

3. The spirit with which alone men should enter on the ministerial office—

[Many, in undertaking this office, have no view but to their own ease, or interest, or honour: and if in these things pre-eminence is to consist, they would have no objection to equal "the very chiefest Apostles." But if their preferment is to resemble that of St. Paul, they care not how many get before them: they have no taste for such things; and if they had ever so small a measure of them, they would account it much more an occasion of complaint than any ground of glorying. But it was in labours and sufferings that St. Paul gloried; first, because they were the best proofs of his ministerial fidelity [e]; and, next, because they were the means of magnifying

[e] 2 Cor. vi. 4.

magnifying the grace of Christ, whose strength was perfected in his weakness[f]. Would to God that more of his spirit were found amongst us! There would not then be such difficulty in finding men to go forth to the work of Missions. Now, the leaving of earthly friends, the incurring of some danger from foreign clime, the having but small provision, and looking forward to many difficulties and privations; these are such formidable obstacles, that but few are willing to encounter them. But they who have so little zeal for God, as not to be willing to encounter trials and afflictions in his service, are not fit for the Ministry in any place: they may satisfy themselves with a ceremonious round of duties; but they will not so satisfy their God, who requires his stewards to be faithful, and his soldiers to war a good warfare. We must tread in the steps of Paul, if ever we would "save ourselves and them that hear us." ———]

4. The proper influence of redeeming love—

[Look at the text, all ye who profess to believe in Christ. See what faith will do, wherever it exists in truth. Look and see what ye have ever done for the Lord that can be compared with this: say whether the best amongst you have not cause to blush and mourn for your unprofitableness? If you ask the apostle Paul, what it was that animated him to such exertions, he will tell you, The love of Christ constraineth me. This it was which carried him forward in the midst of so many difficulties, and enabled him to bear up under such accumulated afflictions. This made him ready to be bound or to die, at any time or at any place, content that "Christ should be magnified in his body whether by life or death." Beloved Brethren, thus will it work in you: It will fill you with zeal for God, and with love to man. It will make you earnestly desirous to spread the knowledge of the Saviour throughout the world; and will render sacrifices, whether of ease or property, delightful to you. You will account it an unspeakable honour that you are permitted to do or suffer any thing for the advancement of his glory; just as the Apostles, after having been imprisoned and beaten by the Jewish council, departed, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for their Redeemer's sake. Rise up then, ye servants of the Lord Jesus, and gird yourselves to your Master's work. Let each inquire, What can I do for Christ? How can my time, my property, my talents, my influence be made serviceable to his cause? It is said of the angels, that they do their Maker's will, "hearkening to the voice of his word;" Do ye thus look for the first intimations of your Saviour's will. If the most arduous and self-denying office be proposed, be ready instantly to say, "Here am I; send me[g]." So will

[f] 2. Cor. xii. 9. [g] Isaiah vi. 8.

you approve yourselves his disciples indeed, and reap a glorious recompence in the great day of his appearing.]

MII.

THE DUTY OF MINISTERS.

2 Cor. xii. 14. *I seek not yours, but you.*

DISINTERESTEDNESS, in whatever it appears, is universally admired ——— But most of all does its excellency appear, when it is manifested in the service of the Sanctuary. The Ministers, whom the Prophet represents as "greedy dogs that could never have enough[a]," and who would "not so much as shut the doors of the Temple, or kindle a fire on the altar for nought[b]," must be considered by every one as the most contemptible of men: whereas the appeal which the Apostle makes to the Church at Corinth, cannot fail of exalting his character in the eyes of all. We may learn from this declaration,

I. The paramount duty of Ministers—

Ministers are the pastors of their flock; and ought to watch over them as parents over their children. Now a parent does not exercise kindness to his children from a selfish consideration of the profit which he may one day make of them, but from a real delight in their welfare; and he regards their happiness as his reward. Thus a Minister must seek,

1. Not his own advantage—

[To obtain honour and emolument is ardently desired by carnal and worldly men: but a Minister of God must be superior to such low pursuits. He must *not* court *the favour of men.* He ought indeed to avoid needless offence both in his preaching and conduct: he should "choose out acceptable words[c]," and endeavour to "please all men for their good to edification[d]:" but he must not conceal or adulterate any single expression of the word of God[e], or attempt to set forth the truths of God in a fascinating manner, for the purpose of gaining applause, or of shunning persecution[f]: he must faithfully "declare the whole counsel of God," and "commend

[a] Isai. lvi. 11. [b] Mal. i. 10. [c] Eccl. xii. 10.
[d] Rom. xv. 2. [e] 2 Cor. ii. 17. [f] 1 Cor. i. 17.

mend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God:" and, if he do not preach in this manner, "he cannot be a servant of Jesus Christ [g]."

Neither must he seek to enrich himself with *their property:* "Those who serve at the altar have a right to live of the altar:" "The ox was not to be muzzled, while he was treading out the corn." "The labourer is worthy of his hire." But the obtaining of a maintenance should not in the least degree operate with a Minister as an inducement to undertake or execute his high office. If he were actuated by such a principle as this, he would degrade himself to a mere hireling [gg]. Nor can he suffer so mean a principle to influence him at all in his work, without greatly diminishing the value of his services, and their acceptableness in the sight of God [h]. The injunction given to Christians in general should be regarded with peculiar scrupulosity by him, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth [i]."]

2. The advantage only of his flock—

[Their sincere *conversion* to God, their *progressive edification* in faith and love, and their *final* everlasting *salvation*, are to be the sole aim of all his labours. "He must lift up his voice like a trumpet, and shew the house of Israel their sins." He must not be satisfied with effecting a change in their sentiments and external conduct, but must continue "travailing in birth with them, till Christ be manifestly formed in their hearts." When that end is attained, his care of them, instead of being relaxed, must be increased. They still need his unremitting exertions, to administer to their numerous wants, and to give them from time to time that direction and encouragement which their necessities require [k]. As long as they continue in this world, he is God's Minister to them for good, and the medium through whom he will communicate to them the blessings of grace and peace. He is to live for them, to the end that he may be "an Helper of their joy," and "perfect that which is lacking in their faith." This is to be his one employment; and he is to consider the salvation of their souls his richest recompence [l].]

This subject naturally involves in it,

II. The corresponding duty of the people—

The relation of pastor and flock, like every other relation in life, has its peculiar and appropriate obligations. Those which arise out of the text, as pertaining to the people, are,

1. To

[g] Gal. i. 10. [gg] 1 Sam. ii. 36. [h] 1 Pet. v. 2.
[i] 1 Cor. x. 24. Phil. ii. 4, 21. [k] Ezek. xxxiv. 4.
[l] 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

1. To seek above all things the salvation of their own souls—

[We are far from saying that people are not to attend to their temporal concerns: on the contrary, we affirm, that a neglect of their worldly business is exceeding criminal in the sight of God; that their duties in civil and social life are as much to be attended to as any other duties whatever; and that their families and dependents would have just cause of complaint, if their temporal interests were disregarded. But still, the first of all duties is, the care of our own souls. Nothing can equal the value of the soul: "if we should gain the whole world, and lose our own soul, what should we be profited?" If a Minister must not suffer any earthly interests to stand in competition with the souls of his people, how much less should the people suffer them to stand in competition with *their own* souls! In this view their duty is very strongly marked; and the reasonableness of attending to it is incontrovertibly established.]

2. To improve the Ministry with all diligence—

[It has been shewn that Ministers should invariably keep in view the salvation of their hearers. What then should the hearers do when about to attend upon the means of grace? Should they not bear in mind their own responsibility for their due improvement of the ordinances? Should they not pray earnestly to God to prepare their hearts for the reception of Divine truth, and to accompany it with the effectual working of his almighty power? Should they not intreat him to give unto their Minister "a mouth and wisdom which none shall be able to gainsay or resist;" and to direct him "how to speak a word in season to their weary souls?" In short, should they not be as solicitous to receive, as their Minister can be to communicate, good; and should not every other consideration be regarded as a matter of comparative indifference? Happy would it be for the Church of God, and happy for the world at large, if such dispositions obtained amongst the hearers, wherever the Gospel is proclaimed!]

APPLICATION—

[We ask, What is the improvement which you have made of our Ministry? We presume not to compare ourselves with the holy Apostle: we know full well how remote we are from him in every attainment: yet we hope that, in some small measure, we may adopt his language in the text, and say, "We seek not yours, but you." (Would to God that we could affirm it as fully, and as confidently, as Paul himself!)

Let

Let each of you then put the question to himself, and ask, Whether the pursuit of your own salvation be the one concern which swallows up, as it were, all others? At least, are all other things comparatively worthless in your eyes? And are you, "as new-born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby?" Remember that, if *we* must give an account of your souls to God, much more must *you* give account of *your own* souls; and the more our exertions for you are increased, the more will your condemnation be aggravated, if they prove ineffectual for your salvation.]

MIII.

SELF-EXAMINATION RECOMMENDED.

2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

IT is generally, perhaps always, found, that they who are most forward to censure others, have most need of personal reformation. So it certainly was with those who laboured to injure the character, and undermine the influence, of the apostle Paul. Whilst they accused him as a weak, ignorant impostor, pretending to a heavenly commission which he had never received, they were in reality no other than ministers of Satan, scattering the flocks which they pretended to feed. Hence they constrained the Apostle to declare, that his forbearance towards them had a limit, and that their defiance of him, if further persisted in, would terminate ere long in their own confusion. To prevent so painful an issue, he intreated them to examine themselves as to their spirit and conduct; and to beware lest, after all their boastings, they should be disapproved of their God at last.

But it is not to persons only who are so circumstanced that the exhortation ought to be addressed: it is of universal importance; and highly proper for our consideration at this time[a].

Let us then consider,

I. The

[a] New Year's Day.

I. The duty to which we are called—

Self-examination is a duty incumbent upon all. ——— But, instead of entering generally into the subject, we will confine our attention to two things:

1. The point more especially to be inquired into—

[The great question for every man to have settled in his mind and conscience is, Whether he be in the faith, or whether he be yet in unbelief? To ascertain this point, we should ask ourselves, Whether we have ever come to Christ as sinners, pleading for mercy solely through the blood of his cross, and "desiring to be found in him," accepted altogether through his meritorious death and passion? Yet, not content with this, we should prosecute the inquiry further, and ask, Whether we be daily living by faith in the Lord Jesus, and receiving every thing out of his fulness? Nor must we rest even though we should receive a favourable testimony from our consciences in this matter: we must examine yet farther the fruits of our faith, and see whether it produce such a life as proves it to be "the faith of God's elect?" If our self-examination proceed not thus far, it will leave us as much under the power of self-deceit, as if we took no pains at all to investigate our state. These are the points which are of vital interest to every true Christian; and by them must the truth of our profession, and the safety of our state, be determined.]

2. The manner of conducting the inquiry—

[The words, "prove your own selves," are not a mere repetition: they are intended to mark more particularly the care and accuracy with which the investigation should be made. The Apostle refers to the trying of metals, in order to find what measure of alloy or dross may be in them. Not to mention the care exercised by the refiner, we all know what care is taken in reference to gold, even when there are but a few pieces of golden coin to be received. We subject it to the closest inspection; we mark its colour, its sound, and, if there be any doubt, its size and weight, that we may not be deceived by counterfeits under the appearance of standard coin. Shall we then take so much pains about things of little value, and neglect the soul which is of more value than ten thousand worlds? Should not rather our care increase in proportion to the loss which we may possibly sustain? This then is the manner in which we should inquire into the concerns of our souls, and more especially into that on which beyond all others the welfare of our souls depends.]

To

To impress the more deeply on our minds this duty, the Apostle suggests,

II. The importance of performing it—

We ought to know our own selves—

[Each other we cannot know; seeing that both the best and the worst of every man is hid from human observation, and can be appreciated only by Him who searcheth the heart. But with "*ourselves*" we may be, and ought to be, acquainted. God has given to us an understanding, that we may know the quality of our actions; a memory, that we may trace them to their true source; and a conscience, that we may pass sentence on ourselves according to our true character. Ignorance of ourselves is the worst of all ignorance: we may be ignorant of every thing else, and yet come to God in Christ Jesus with acceptance: but if we are ignorant of ourselves, we must of necessity be unhumbled and impenitent, and consequently objects of God's utter abhorrence. The very manner in which the Apostle asks the question, "Know ye not your own selves?" shews, that self-ignorance is a just ground for self-reproach.]

Whatever we may think of ourselves, "if Christ be not in us, we are reprobates"—

[The term "reprobates" conveys a much harsher idea than is contained in the original. The Apostle, having bidden us *prove* our own selves as metals are tried and proved, tells us that, if in the issue we be found without Christ, we shall be regarded by our God as base metal, or as dross: we shall be disapproved, and rejected[b]. And this is the very truth of God. If "Christ dwell in our hearts by faith," it is well: but if he be not in us, by his Spirit, by his influence, by his grace, we are mere counterfeits, and no better: we may pass current here, if I may so say, but we shall be detected and discarded in the great day of account.———And is this a truth unknown to us? Has not God expressly said, that "Christ is our life," and that, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his?" How comes it then that this sentiment is ever doubted for one moment? Beloved Brethren, Neither the truth itself, nor its bearing on your own state before God, ought to be unknown to any of you. You ought to have the experience of it in your souls, and the evidence of it in your lives: nor should you ever cease to examine and prove yourselves, till you are assured, on truly Scriptural grounds, that "Christ has indeed been formed in you,"

[b] Jer. vi. 30.

you[c]," and that you are so "joined to him as to be one spirit with him[d]."]

Permit me, in CONCLUSION, to urge upon you this duty, from two important considerations: Consider,

1. The danger of self-deception—

[The great mass of mankind deceive their own souls: the generality perform not this duty at all: and, of those who do, few carry it to a due extent. It is not sufficient to inquire into our external conduct: we must inquire into the life of faith upon the Son of God, and see how far *that* is realized in us. *That*, if we be tolerably right in external matters, we take for granted: but we must make *that*, above all, the subject of our diligent inquiry; because, if Christ be not in us, there is nothing in us that can ever be approved of by our God———O what a fearful thing will it be to be found dross at the last!———Remember, "Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth[e]."]

2. The comfort of a self-approving conscience—

[St. Paul felt this in a very high degree[f]; and we also may enjoy it, if it be not our own fault. Some deride the idea of marks and evidences, and maintain that the Christian has no need of paying any attention to them. But, how we are to "examine and prove ourselves" without them, is beyond their power to inform us, and of mine to conceive. We must bring ourselves to the test of God's word: and if, from a diligent comparison of ourselves with the commands of God and the examples of his holy Apostles, we find that our experience is such as is required of us in the Gospel, then may we rejoice both in the retrospect of our past lives, and in the prospect of the future judgment: "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things: but if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God[g]."]

[c] Gal. iv. 19. [d] 1 Cor. vi. 17. [e] 2 Cor. x. 18.
[f] 2 Cor. i. 12. [g] 1 John iii. 20, 21.

MIV.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE.

Gal. i. 8, 9. *Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you,*

you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

TO exercise candour and forbearance towards those who differ from us, is the duty of all: Yet there are bounds beyond which candour becomes indifference, and forbearance treason. In things which are non-essential, and only of secondary importance, we should on no account be rigid: We should form our own opinions, and leave others to follow their own judgment: yea, rather than grieve them by an unnecessary adherence to our own ways, we should conform to theirs, or at least forbear the exercise of our own. This was the conduct of the apostle Paul. He "bore with the infirmities of his weak brethren[a]:" he circumcised Timothy, in order that he might gain an easier access to them for their good[b]. "He became all things to all men," that he might win their souls[c]: and rather than prove a stumbling-block to any, by using that liberty to which he was introduced by the Gospel, he would decline the use of meat to the latest hour of his life[d]. But was this his practice when he came to things essential? Did he express no concern when he saw the whole city of Athens given to idolatry? Yes; "his spirit was stirred within him," and he testified boldly against their ignorant superstitions[e]. When he perceived that some of the Corinthians were lax in their sentiments and conduct, he told them plainly, that "if any man defiled the temple of God, him would God destroy[f]. Thus, in the passage before us, he, who on other occasions "was gentle among them, even like a nursing mother cherishing her children[g]," was filled with indignation against those who perverted the "Gospel of Christ," and denounced against every one of them, even though he were an angel from heaven, the most awful anathemas: Yea, that they might know the fixedness of his mind respecting it,

[a] Rom. xiv. 1. & xv. 1.
[b] Acts xvi. 3.
[c] 1 Cor. ix. 19—22.
[d] 1 Cor. viii. 13.
[e] Acts xvii. 16, 22.
[f] 1 Cor. iii. 17.
[g] 1 Thess. ii. 7.

it, he renewed his declarations, and repeated his anathemas.

Let us then inquire,

I. What was the Gospel which Paul preached—

On this point the utmost caution is necessary. The Apostle pronounces every one accursed that preaches any other Gospel different from that which he had preached to the Galatians. A mistake therefore in this matter will be absolutely fatal to us.

Observe then, that the great doctrine which he insisted on, was *Justification by faith alone without the works of the law*. This, I say, was the point which he maintained, in contradistinction to justification by works, or by faith and works together: and this, namely, *Justification by faith without works*, was the Gospel which he preached.

Respecting this we can have no doubt, if we consider,

1. The statements which he makes—

[Here let us notice his train of argument, especially in that part of the Epistle which accords with a similar statement in the Epistle to the Romans. He observes, that Abraham was justified by *faith*; and that we become partakers of his benefits by faith also[h]: that the law, instead of justifying, curses and condemns us[i]: that the Prophets asserted justification by faith, in direct opposition to justification by the works of the law[k]: and that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, not that we might afterwards be justified by the law, but that we might enjoy his blessings through faith[l]. The Apostle then goes on to illustrate and confirm this by the covenant which was made with Abraham. In this covenant God gave to Abraham, and to his believing posterity, the inheritance of eternal life. Four hundred and thirty years after, he gave the law to Moses, and made another covenant with the Jews respecting their possession of the earthly Canaan. This latter covenant therefore, you perceive, was made between different parties; the former being between God and Abraham, (including all the believing seed of Abraham, whether they were circumcised or not,) and the other, between God and the Jewish nation only: consequently, as a man's covenant cannot be annulled unless both parties consent,

[h] Gal. iii. 6—9.
[i] ib. ver. 10.
[k] ib. ver. 11, 12.
[l] ib. ver. 13, 14.

consent, so the covenant which God made with the Jews cannot supersede that which he had so long before made with Abraham and his believing seed; because the latter party were not present at the making of it, nor had they ever consented to annul the covenant which had been made with *them*[m]. If it be asked, Why then was the law given? we answer, Not to supersede the covenant which had been "before confirmed of God in Christ," but to shew men their need of that better covenant[n], and to serve "as a school-master to bring them unto Christ, *that they might be justified by faith*[o]."

Now compare this with the whole train of argument in the five first chapters to the Romans, and the coincidence will establish the point at once. The Apostle there shews our condemnation by the law, and the consequent impossibility of ever being justified by it: from thence he shews the necessity of seeking justification by faith in Christ[p]; more especially because that way of justification, *and that alone*, would exclude boasting[q]. He then proceeds to establish his point by the examples of Abraham[r] and David[s], both of whom sought justification by faith only: and he argues from thence, that if works compose any part of our justifying righteousness, "our reward will not be of grace, but of debt;" and heaven will be, not a gift bestowed, but a compensation that we have earned: and consequently, that *we must "not work"* in order to obtain righteousness, but "believe on him *who justifieth the ungodly*[t]:" (Mark well, not the godly, but *the ungodly*). If it be said, that another Apostle represents Abraham as justified by his works[u], St. Paul *proves to demonstration*, that St. James cannot speak of Abraham's justification before God, but only of the justification, or *manifestation*, of his faith, as true, and genuine; for that Abraham "was justified while yet he was in uncircumcision[x];" which was not only before he offered Isaac upon the altar, but before Isaac was born[y].

It is needless to prosecute any further the Apostle's statement: it will be sufficient just to mention his conclusion from it, which is; "THEREFORE *being justified by faith*, we have peace with God[z]."]

2. The objections he anticipates—

[In

[m] Gal. iii. 15—18.
[n] ib. ver. 19.
[o] ib. ver. 24.
[p] Rom. iii. 19—22.
[q] Rom. iii. 27, 28. (Mark ver. 28.)
[r] Rom. iv. 1—3.
[s] Rom. iv. 6—8.
[t] ib. ver. 4—5. Mark these verses, and weigh every word in them.
[u] Jam. ii. 21.
[x] Jam. iv. 9—11.
[y] Gen. xvii. 19, 23, 24. with Gen. xxii. 1—13.
[z] Rom. v. 1.

[In all his writings St. Paul is careful to obviate the objections which he foresees will be urged against the truths that he inculcates. The objections which he supposes an ignorant person will make, are two: *first*, That if, where sin has abounded, grace much more abounds, we may "continue in sin that grace may abound[a]:" for the greater sinners we are before we are justified, the more will the grace of God be magnified in justifying such ungodly creatures: And, if a person be justified without any respect to his works, then, *secondly*, we may live in sin after we are justified; because we are not under the law which requires good works, but under a dispensation of grace[b], wherein life is given freely without any regard to our works, past, present, or future.

Time will not admit of our considering *how he answers* these objections: (suffice it to say, that he shews they have no solid foundation; and that good works are effectually secured, though they be not taken into the account in our justification:) we mention the objections only, to shew what the doctrine *must be* that gave rise to them. Suppose the Apostle had said, that we were to be justified by our works alone, or by faith and works united, what room could there have been for such objections as these? If works were taken into consideration in the matter of our justification before God, we could have no temptation whatever, *on that account*, to neglect them, either before or after we were justified. But if we are justified by faith without any respect to our works, then we can see at once, how a person, not understanding the whole of the Christian scheme, might conceive that the doctrine tended to licentiousness. Indeed these are the very objections that are yet daily urged by ignorant people against the Apostle's doctrine: they cry, 'You need only believe, and you may live as you will; and the more wicked you are, the more will the free grace of God be glorified in saving you.' Persons never think of urging these objections against those who preach salvation by works, whether in whole or in part; which is a sure proof, that the Apostle did not preach *that* doctrine; but that the doctrine which he delivered was that of salvation by faith without the works of the law. In this view of his doctrine, there is *some apparent* ground for the objection: in any other view of it, there is *none at all*.]

3. The perversions he complains of—.

[What was it he complained of in the conduct of the Galatians? It was this: that they added the observance of of the Mosaic ritual to the duties enjoined by the Gospel[c], hoping thereby to render themselves more acceptable to God. And IN what manner does he complain of this? He calls it an introducing

[a] Rom. v. 21. & vi. 1. [b] Rom. vi. 15. [c] Gal. iv. 9, 10.

introducing of "another Gospel which yet was not another[d];" (for it was a mongrel religion, neither law nor gospel;) or, in other words, a "perversion or rejection of the true Gospel[e]." Now what ground had he for such heavy accusations, if he himself preached salvation (whether in whole or in part) by the works of the law? On this supposition, the more works they did, the more certain they would be to obtain justification: supposing the Mosaic ritual to be abrogated, there still was no harm in "observing days, and months, and years;" and all that he could properly say to them on the occasion, was, "That they were giving themselves needless trouble:" he must have commended them for their zeal in doing these works; and only told them, that *now* there was no occasion for these observances. But if he preached justification by faith without the works of the law, and saw that they were performing these works in order to secure their justification, then he might well say, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain[f]."

Again—We read of heavy complaints against Peter. What had Peter done? He had conversed familiarly with the Gentile converts, and lived for a season, as they did, without any regard to the Mosaic ritual. But when some Judaizing converts came from Jerusalem, he was afraid of offending their prejudices; and therefore he forsook the Gentile converts, and lived with the others in the observance of all the Jewish rites and ceremonies[g]. By this conduct, he not only sanctioned the erroneous idea that the Mosaic rites were still obligatory on the Jewish Christians, but that it was necessary even for the Gentile Christians to conform to them. Now this, in any view of St. Paul's doctrine, was highly blame-worthy; because it was imposing a needless yoke upon the neck of the Gentiles. But this was all: and supposing that Paul had preached justification by works, this was all that he could properly lay to the charge of Peter. But supposing, as we have shewn, that the Gospel which Paul preached, held forth justification by faith *alone*, then there was abundant reason for rebuking Peter in the presence of the whole Church, and accusing him of subverting the foundations of the Gospel[h], and declaring that, so far as he prevailed, he "frustrated the grace of God," and made "the death of Christ to be in vain[i]."]

We are convinced that, if this accumulated evidence be duly weighed, no doubt can remain upon our minds respecting the doctrine which Paul preached,

[d] Gal. i. 6. 7. [e] ib. with iii. 1. [f] Gal. iv. 11.
[g] Gal. ii. 11—13. [h] Gal. ii. 14—16. [i] Gal. ii. 21.

preached, and which he calls in our text "The Gospel." Let us then inquire,

II. Why he manifested such zeal in maintaining it—

No man had less of *bigotry* than the apostle Paul: for, though a Jew, he spent his life in vindicating the liberty of the Gentiles, and, in fact, died a martyr to their cause[k]. Nor was he actuated by *resentment*; for, when most blaming the Galatians, he says, "Ye have not injured me at all[l]." Nor was he impelled by *ambition*, as though he would preserve an unrivalled ascendancy over the Galatian Church; for he considered himself as "not having dominion over their faith, but merely as a helper of their joy[m]." His view was to maintain,

1. The purity of the Gospel—

[The Gospel is a fountain of life to a ruined world: nor is there a cistern in the universe that can afford waters so salubrious. It is there alone that Christ is revealed: and "there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we can be saved[n]." Now a perverting of this fundamental doctrine of justification by faith alone, is a poisoning of that fountain; and consequently a destroying of the whole human race, as well those to whom its waters flow, as those who dwell in the parched desert. Suppose any man were found so inhuman, as without any cause to poison the spring whereby a populous city were sustained, and from whence alone they could draw what was necessary for their sustenance; would not every living creature execrate him? Yet that man would be innocent in comparison of him who diffuses the deadly doctrines of a mutilated Gospel: for the former destroys only the bodies of men; whereas the latter consigns over their souls to everlasting destruction. No wonder then that the Apostle expressed himself with such vehemence! no wonder that he pronounced every person, whether it were himself, or an angel from heaven, "accursed," who should dare to "adulterate the sincere milk of the Word[o]!" It was on this ground that he resisted with invincible firmness the attempts that were made to get Titus circumcised[p]: and it was with the same view that he opposed so strenuously all the efforts of Judaizing teachers, even though they were sanctioned by the examples of Barnabas or Peter himself.]

2. The

[k] Acts xxi. 28—31. [l] Gal. iv. 12. [m] 2 Cor. i. 24.
[n] Acts iv. 12. [o] 2 Cor. ii. 17. & iv. 2. [p] Gal. ii. 5.

2. The importance of the Gospel—

[Many who would shudder at the idea of infidelity, are ready to consider the doctrine of justification by faith alone, either as erroneous, or at best as speculative, doubtful, and indifferent. They will not unfrequently say, 'Take care to do good works, and you need not trouble yourself about these nice questions.' Now I readily grant that there are nice questions relative to predestination and election, and some other points, which may, or may not, be received consistently with our "holding the Head," the Lord Jesus Christ: but this is not the case with the doctrine before us. Justification by faith alone, is the hinge upon which the whole of Christianity turns. If that be practically received into the heart, it will save a man, though he be mistaken in many other points: but a mistake relative to that will be fatal to him, though he should hold every other truth in the Bible. Hear how St. Paul speaks in a passage before referred to; "If righteousness come by the law, then CHRIST IS DEAD IN VAIN[q];" that is; It was in vain that Christ came down from heaven: all that he did or suffered was in vain, "if righteousness (whether in whole or in part) come by the law;" for "all that are under the law are under the curse[r]." Again, with peculiar firmness and solemnity he says, "Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing[s]." What! was there any sin in circumcision? Why then did Paul circumcise Timothy? No: the act was as innocent as any act could be: but the sin lay, in complying with that ordinance with a view to further their justification before God: and then, it not only did not improve the prospects of the person that submitted to it, but made "Christ himself of no profit to him whatsoever." Once more he says, "Christ is become of no effect unto you; whosoever of you is justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace[t];" that is, Ye have utterly renounced the grace of the Gospel, and ye can no more be saved, than the devils themselves; for CHRIST IS BECOME OF NO EFFECT UNTO YOU. In the Epistle to the Romans he confirms these things, not merely, as in the forecited passages, by strong assertions, but by matter of fact: for he declares that the Jews were left to perish, notwithstanding all their endeavours to obtain righteousness by the law; and that the Gentiles, who had paid no attention whatever to righteousness of any kind, were saved; and that the reason of the one being saved, while the others perished, was, that the one embraced the doctrine of justification by faith only, while the others were too proud to submit to it[u].

Let

[q] Gal. ii. 21. [r] Gal. iii. 10. compared with Gal. v. 3.
[s] Gal. v. 2. [t] Gal. v. 4. [u] Rom. ix. 30—33. & x. 3, 4.

Let these matters be considered; and then let any one say, whether there was not good reason for the Apostle's anathemas, which under any other circumstances might have been justly counted harsh and severe. He felt the importance of the doctrine; and he wished all others to feel it: and therefore he did not hesitate to imprecate curses even on an angel from heaven, if any one could be found blind and impious enough to set it aside.]

3. The sufficiency of the Gospel—

[We are far from imputing any evil intention to those who object to the doctrine we are maintaining. "They have a zeal for God; but not according to knowledge[x]." They have fears and apprehensions that the Gospel which has been set forth, is insufficient either *to justify*, or *to sanctify*, the soul: and on this account they add good works to faith in order to their justification; conceiving, that the righteousness of Christ cannot be the less effectual for the addition of ours to it; and that the idea of being justified in part by our good works must be an irresistible inducement to the performance of them: whereas the exalting of faith as the *only* mean of salvation, must, they suppose, relax men's diligence in good works. But let us not presume to hold up the ark, or to change the plans which Infinite Wisdom has devised for the salvation of man. "The robe of Christ's righteousness" is quite sufficient "to cover our nakedness[y]," without adding to it "the filthy rags of our righteousness[z]." And there are grounds enough for abounding in good works without putting them into the place of Christ, and making a Saviour of them. The Scripture is plain; "All that believe are justified from all things[a]:" and it is equally plain, that "faith will work by love[b]," and "overcome the world[c]," and "purify the heart[d]." Had the Gospel needed any addition in either of these respects, St. Paul would not have been so adverse to the attempts to improve it: but, as it needed nothing of this kind, he could not endure that we should presume to be wiser than God: "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty, instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it[e]."]

Our IMPROVEMENT of this subject must be short: but we cannot conclude it without briefly noticing its importance,

1. To those who minister—

[It is not within the compass of language to suggest words that could more deserve the attention of Ministers, than those

[x] Rom. x. 2. [y] Rev. iii. 18. [z] Isai. lxiv. 6.
[a] Acts xiii. 39. [b] Gal. v. 6. [c] 1 John v. 4.
[d] Acts xv. 9. [e] Job xl. 2.

those of our text. Many things doubtless are requisite for a due discharge of the Ministry: but there is one that as far surpasses all others, as the sun exceeds a taper. It is this; an acquaintance with this fundamental doctrine of Scripture, the doctrine of justification by faith alone. If a man be not instructed in it, how can he instruct others? and if he be not instructing them in this, what is he doing, but bringing down curses upon his own soul, and leading his people also to destruction? Would to God, that those who look forward to the Ministry as a source of worldly honour or emolument, would seriously reflect upon this tremendous passage, and consider, whether it be worth their while to involve themselves in such accumulated misery! Would to God that those also who are in the Ministry, would consider what they have undertaken to preach, and what is uniformly inculcated in the articles, the homilies, and the liturgy of our Church! But whether men will consider for themselves or not, we must say, "a necessity is laid upon them, and woe be unto them if they preach not the Gospel[f]."]

2. To those who are ministered unto—

[If there be such a necessity laid on Ministers to preach "the truth as it is in Jesus," there must be the same necessity for you to hear and embrace it. Inquire then, what is the Gospel that ye have received? Is it *this*, or is it "*another* Gospel?" Are your views of the Gospel such as would furnish *occasion* for an ignorant person to raise objections against it as tending to licentiousness? Yet do you, at the same time, manifest by your life and conversation, that it is "a doctrine according to godliness?" Inquire into these things; for "they are your life[g]." If your views of Divine truth do not answer to this description, they are not such as the apostle Paul had, nor will they lead you where he is. If, instead of looking for salvation by faith alone, you are mixing your own merits with those of Christ, you must inevitably perish: Christ shall profit you nothing. You may build hay, and wood, and stubble, upon the true foundation, and yet be saved at last: you will suffer loss indeed: yet you will be saved, though it be as persons snatched out of the fire[h]. But if you build on any thing besides Christ, you have a foundation of sand, which will fail you in the hour of trial, to the destruction of your whole fabric, and the ruin of your own souls[i]. The mixtures of your righteousness with Christ's, like the feet of iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image, will never bear the super-incumbent weight: they cannot unite; they cannot adhere; if you attempt to stand upon them, you will

[f] 1 Cor. ix. 16.
[g] Deut. xxxii. 47.
[h] 1 Cor. iii. 12, 15.
[i] Matt. vii. 26, 27.

will fall and be broken in pieces [k]. There is but "one faith[l]," but one foundation: "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ[m]." Take heed therefore that you build upon it [n]; and let your superstructure be such as shall be approved in the day when it shall be tried by fire[o].]

[k] Dan. ii. 33, 34. [l] Eph. iv. 5. [m] 1 Cor. iii. 11.
[n] 1 Cor. iii. 10. [o] 1 Cor. iii. 13, 14.

MV.

CONVERSION, AND ITS EFFECTS.

Gal. i. 15, 16. *When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.*

GREAT were the trials which the apostle Paul met with in the Churches of Galatia through the subtlety of some Judaizing teachers, who laboured, and with too much success, to turn the newly converted Christians from the faith which Paul had preached to them, and to bring them over to a faith compounded of Judaism and Christianity. To give the greater weight to their doctrines, they represented Paul as preaching a Gospel which he had received only from human authority, and not from the Lord Jesus Christ, as all the other Apostles had; and consequently, as unworthy of the confidence which his followers reposed in him. To counteract the sad effects of their representations, St. Paul, in the very introduction to his Epistles to the Galatians, declared, that he had received his Gospel, "not of men (as the authors), nor by man (as an instrument), but directly from the Lord Jesus Christ, and from God the Father, who had raised him from the dead[a]: and then, after expressing his "wonder that they had been so often turned away from him who had called them into the grace of Christ," he proceeds to vindicate more fully his Apostolic authority: "I certify you, brethren," says he, "that the Gospel which

[a] ver. 1.

which was preached of me is not after man: for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ[b]." Then, after specifying the time when it was revealed to him, namely, in his way to Damascus, he asserts, that he studiously avoided every thing which might be construed into a reception of it from men; for he had not gone at all at that time to Jerusalem, where the other Apostles were, but into Arabia, where there was none but God to teach him.

In the account which he thus gives of himself, he gives us an insight into the work of conversion, and into that line of conduct which all converted persons should pursue. It is for the elucidating of these two things that we have selected the passage which we have just read: from which we shall take occasion to shew,

I. Wherein our *conversion* must resemble Paul's—

Certainly it is not at all necessary that our conversion should resemble his in the external circumstances; for in respect of them he stands alone, not so much as one of his attendants being, as far as we know, converted with him. Nor even in respect of the suddenness of it, is it at all necessary that we should resemble him: our conversion may be so gradual that we cannot trace it to any particular time, and yet may be as certain and as evident as his. But in its essential parts conversion is the same in all. Ours therefore must resemble his,

1. In its origin, the electing love of God—

[God "separated him from his mother's womb to the apostolic office, just as he had done the prophet Jeremiah to the prophetic office[c]. It was evidently not for his righteousness that he was thus chosen to know Christ for himself, and to preach him to others: for, to the very instant of his conversion, he was a blasphemer, and injurious, and a persecutor. His election can be traced to nothing but the sovereign will of God. And to this must *our* conversion also be traced, if ever we have been converted at all. "We have not chosen Christ, but Christ us:" yea, "we were chosen of God in Christ before the foundation of the world," and "predestinated to the

[b] ver. 11, 12. [c] Jer. i. 5.

the adoption of children" into his family. In this very Epistle St. Paul most studiously marks this. He speaks of the Galatians as having known God: but, fearing, as it were, lest they should suppose that the work had begun on their part, he recalls his word, and says, "after that ye have known God, *or rather are known of God*[d]." Let us bear in mind therefore, that, if we are converted, it is "not because we loved God, but because he loved us[e]:" "he loved us with an everlasting love; and therefore with loving kindness hath he drawn us[f]."]

2. In its means, the effectual grace of God—

[God "called him by his grace:" and without the effectual working of his grace the Apostle would never have been called at all. Nor shall we ever attain to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus in any other way. Of ourselves "we can do nothing," no, "not so much as think a good thought:" it is "God alone who can give us either to will or to do" any thing that is good[g]. "If we are brought into a state of grace," it is "he who hath made us willing in the day of his power." "We are *his* workmanship *created* in Christ Jesus unto good works[h]:" the new creation is his work as much as the old: whatever be the means, or whoever be the instrument "to plant or water, it is he alone that gives the increase[i]." Every Child of man must say with the Apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am[k]:" "whoever he be that is born again, he is born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God[l]."]

3. In its manner, by a revelation of Christ to the soul—

[As far as relates to the *external* circumstances, we have before said that no analogy exists: but as it respects the revelation of Christ to the soul, conversion is the same in all. There may be a preparatory work of conviction without this; but no conversion: for in this consists the essence of conversion, if we may so speak. The revelation given in the Scriptures may inform the mind; but it is the revelation made to the soul, that can alone convert and save the soul. The means which converted Saul, produced no such effect on his companions. Many others heard the word preached to them, as well as Lydia: but she received benefit from it which others did not, because "the Lord opened her heart to attend to the things that were spoken." So, if we are savingly enlightened, it is because God has "opened the eyes of our understanding."]

[d] Gal. iv. 9. See also Phil. iii. 12.
[e] 1 John iv. 10.
[f] Jer. xxxi. 3.
[g] Phil. ii. 13.
[h] Eph. ii. 10.
[i] 1 Cor. iii. 6.
[k] 1 Cor. xv. 10.
[l] John i. 12.

understanding," and "given us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of his Son[m]," and "shined into our hearts to give the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ[n]." It is then only that we truly "receive Christ" as *our* Saviour[o]: then only do we "feed truly on his flesh and blood;" then only do we "believe in him to the saving of the soul."]

4. In its end, to make him known in the world—

[We are not all called, like St. Paul, "to *preach* Christ among the heathen;" but we are called, like Paul himself, to confess him openly[oo], and to become his avowed followers, and to shew forth in our life and conversation the power of his grace. We are all to "shine as lights in a dark world, holding forth the word of life[p]." We are to be his witnesses, even "epistles of Christ known and read of all men." We are so to make our "light shine before men, that all who see us may approve of his ways, and glorify his name[q]."]

From the effect produced on him by his conversion, we are led to consider,

II. Wherein our conduct must resemble his—

It is probable that his words relate rather to his not seeking any intercourse with those who were at that time the pillars of the Christian Church, than to any workings of his own mind, which he studiously suppressed. Yet the decision of his character on the occasion shews us what we should be and do, when once we have received the converting grace of God. We must enter on the duties assigned us,

1. Without hesitation—

[Many doubts will be suggested by our own corrupt hearts, how far it is necessary or expedient to devote ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ; and our carnal friends will not fail to remonstrate with us on our new views and pursuits. They will tell us of the injury which we shall sustain in our reputation and interests, if we make ourselves singular, and join ourselves to "a sect that is everywhere evil spoken of." They will beseech us with much affectionate importunity to put away these enthusiastic notions: and, if they have power over us, they will blend menaces with their intreaties. But, from whatever quarter the temptation may come, we must examine its tendency, and, as soon as we see that its effect will

[m] Eph. i. 17, 18. [n] 2 Cor. iv. 6. [o] John i. 12.
[oo] Acts xxii. 14, 15. Matt. x. 32, 33. [p] Phil. ii. 15, 16.
[q] Matt. v. 16.

will be to draw us back to the world, we must say to it, as our blessed Lord under similar circumstances said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." We must listen to nothing, however specious it may be, that would cause us to dissemble with God, or to divert us from the path prescribed to us in his word. Our one question must be, what does my Lord and Saviour require of me? and by that must we be determined, though the whole world should endeavour to obstruct our way. We must neither be allured by interest, nor deterred by fear: but must "hate father and mother, and even our own lives also, in comparison of Christ."]

2. Without delay—

[Thus did Paul: "*immediately*" he betook himself to the work assigned him[r]. Thus should we also: We should not say, Let me go home first and take leave of my friends, or bury my father: No: let the dead bury their dead: our duty is to fulfil the will of Him who has called us to his kingdom and glory. We shall occasionally feel strong temptations on this subject. When difficulties and dangers present themselves, we shall be ready to think we shall find some more convenient season, when our way will be more plain and easy. But we must, like Matthew at the receipt of custom, or like others of the Apostles at their nets, forsake all and follow Christ.]

APPLICATION—

1. Let those of you who have experienced converting grace, give God the glory—

[There is a strange backwardness in man to do this. If all be traced to the sovereign grace of God, we bring forward a thousand objections, that so we may divide the glory with him: But this is not so in heaven: nor should it be on earth. In heaven, there is no song but that of "Salvation to God and to the Lamb." Let it be so on earth. It is our indispensable duty, our truest interest, our highest happiness, to give glory to the God of heaven. Let us do it cheerfully, and without reserve.]

2. Let those in whose hearts Christ has been revealed, seek to know more and more of him—

[It is but little that any man knows of him. Paul himself, after preaching Christ for twenty years, desired to know more of him, in the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings. Let us also seek to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of him." The more we behold his glory, the more shall we be changed into his image: and the more

[r] Acts ix. 19, 20.

more we comprehend of his unsearchable love, the more shall we be filled with all the fulness of God.]

3. Let all learn how to avoid the snares which Satan lays for their feet—

[We must, not parley with temptation, but act with promptitude and decision. There must be in us a firmness that is immoveable: yet should that firmness be tempered with suavity. We must not think, that, because our superiors are wrong in their endeavours to keep us back from Christ, we are at liberty to slight their admonitions on other subjects, or even on religion itself, as far as we can without violating the commands of Christ. Whilst we guard against an undue conformity to the world, we must guard also against two common evils, superstition, and unnecessary scrupulosity: scrupulosity makes that to be sin which is no sin; and superstition makes that to be duty which is no duty. Let us get our minds rightly instructed: in matters of indifference, let us be willing to yield; but in matters of vital interest and importance, let us be firm and faithful even unto death.]

MVI.

PETER REPROVED BY PAUL.

Gal. ii. 14—16. *When I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter, before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

THE Apostles, in all that they *declared*, were infallible, being under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit, by whom they were inspired; but, in what they *did*, they were frail and fallible, like other men. Of this we have a painful evidence in the passage before us; wherein we see Peter, from whom the Roman Pontiff, unfortunately for his own claims, derives his infallibility, fallen into the grossest error,

and acting in a way which brought upon him the severest reprehension. The circumstances relating to that event are faithfully recorded for the instruction of the Church in all ages: and, as they comprehend things of fundamental importance to our welfare, we will enter into them somewhat minutely; and state,

I. The conduct reproved—

Peter during his stay at Antioch, where the Church consisted almost exclusively of converts from among the Gentiles, had disregarded the distinctions of the Jewish law, which he knew to be no longer binding; and had acted according to the customs of the Gentiles amongst whom he dwelt: but upon the arrival of certain persons from Jerusalem, where the ordinances of the Mosaic law were still continued in the Church, he returned to the observation of the Jewish ritual, and constrained the Gentiles also to follow his example. Now this was highly reprehensible, being,

1. Most sinful in itself—

[Had he from a tender regard to the prejudices of his less enlightened brethren conformed to their customs, he would have done well; even as Paul himself did, when, "to the Jews, he became a Jew, and to those who were under the law, as under the law." But, whilst he did this, he should have taken care to maintain the liberty of the Gentile converts, and to explain to them his reasons for reverting to Jewish ceremonies, that they might not be ensnared by his example. But instead of acting with this caution and tenderness towards the Gentile converts, he withdrew from them, and compelled them to conform to *Jewish* rites: And this he did too, not *from love* to the Jews, but *from fear* of their displeasure. Now this was gross "dissimulation:" He *knew*, that the Jewish law was abrogated: he *knew*, that he himself was liberated from the observance of it: he *knew*, that the Gentiles could have no concern with it; and that to enjoin the observance of it on them, was to impose a yoke on them, which neither he himself nor any of his ancestors had been able to sustain. In this therefore he walked not uprightly; but betrayed the trust which had been committed to him, the Apostolic trust, of enlightening and saving a ruined world.]

2. Most pernicious in its tendency—

[This conduct of his tended to sanction the most fatal error, and, in fact, to subvert the whole Gospel. The Jewish converts had an idea, that the Gospel itself could not save them, unless they added to it the observance of the law: and it was found impossible at once to eradicate this prejudice from the Jewish mind, because they could not see how that which God had so strictly enjoined under one dispensation could be wholly set aside under another. Indeed this was the great stumbling-block to the Jews: and if they could have been allowed to blend their law with the Gospel, they would almost universally, and with great readiness, have embraced the Gospel. But of such a mixture the Gospel does not admit. Christ has in his own person fulfilled the law; and, by his obedience unto death, salvation is provided for a ruined world. No other obedience must be blended with it as a joint ground of hope: his righteousness is that which alone can justify us before God; and his must be all the glory. But Peter by this conduct confirmed the Jews in their error, and established the same error among the Gentiles also: and, if God had not raised up Paul to reprove it in the outset, the whole Gospel might have been superseded, almost as soon as it had been promulgated: and all the effects of Christ's Mediation might have been utterly destroyed. We see on that occasion how far the influence of Peter extended: for it drew away all the Jewish converts at Antioch, yes, and even Barnabas himself, from the truth of God: and if the evil has not been stopped in its commencement, who can tell how soon, and how fatally, it might have inundated the whole Church? Verily such conduct as this deserved reproof; and we have reason to bless our God, who endued Paul with wisdom and courage to reprove it.]

Suitable to the occasion was,

II. The reproof administered—

St. Paul, when he saw the misconduct of Peter, did not secretly endeavour to destroy the character of his offending Brother, but boldly and openly reproved him before the whole Church. Had the offence been of a private and personal nature only, it would have been right to admonish his Brother privately, and not bring it before the Church, till private admonitions had been used in vain: but, when the welfare of the whole Church was at stake, it was necessary that the reproof should be as public as the offence. Hence, when all the Church was assembled, Paul took occasion to reprove,

1. His

1. His inconsistency—

[Peter had in that very place neglected the Jewish law, as he was fully authorized to do: but, when some Jews came thither from Jerusalem, he both altered his own conduct, and compelled all others, even Gentiles themselves, to follow his example. What a grievous inconsistency was this! And how must he have been struck dumb, when Paul so pointedly expostulated with him, "If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, WHY compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" What excuse could he offer? Alas! none at all.

But grievous as such inconsistency would have been in any one, it was peculiarly sinful in Peter: for it was at this very place, Antioch, that the point had been some time before discussed with great vehemence; and so pertinaciously had the Jewish teachers maintained the universal and perpetual obligation of their own law, that not even the united wisdom and authority of Paul and Barnabas could settle the dispute; so that it became necessary to refer the matter to the decision of the whole College of Apostles at Jerusalem. Accordingly the question was stated; and Paul and Barnabas on the one side, and some of the Judaizing teachers on the other, were deputed to go up to Jerusalem, and there to get it finally settled by such authority as they were all agreed to submit to. Accordingly the deputation went; and laid before the Apostles the matter in dispute. And who, of all the Apostles, was the man that undertook to determine it? It was this very Peter, who now was undoing all that he had before done. He called the attention of the Assembly to the commission which he had received to open the kingdom of heaven both to Jews and Gentiles; and reminded them, that, on his preaching first to the Gentiles, God had sent down the Holy Spirit on them, precisely as he had before done upon the Jews at the day of Pentecost; thus visibly and unquestionably declaring, that the Gentiles were to have the Gospel freely administered to them without any observance of the Jewish law. And on this testimony, supported by that of the prophetic writings, James, who presided on that occasion, determined the point; and, to the great joy of the Gentile converts, confirmed to them the liberty which they were so desirous to retain[a]. Yet behold, this very Peter, at this very place, before these very Gentiles, and in the presence of these very messengers, Paul and Barnabas, took upon himself to rescind the decree of the whole College of Apostles, and to insist on the Gentiles observing Jewish rites, which he, as a Jew, had neglected and despised, Alas! Peter, who would have expected

[a] Acts xv. 1—19. with Matt. xvi. 18, 19. & Acts x. 34—44.

expected this at thy hands? Who would have thought that, after having been distinguished above all the Children of men, in that the keys of the kingdom of heaven were committed unto thee from thy Saviour's hands; and after having seen myriads flock into it in consequence of thine opening of the doors, thou shouldest use those very keys to shut the doors again, and thereby, as far as in thee lay, exclude from the kingdom all who had already entered, and all others of the human race? Verily, the reproof given thee, though so public and severe, was nothing more than what thou justly deservedst for thy grievous inconsistency.]

2. His impiety—

[It was not the decree of man, but of the Most High God, that he presumed to abrogate. God had graciously sent his only-begotten Son to be the Saviour of the World: and had declared that in him should all nations be blessed. By faith in that Saviour had Abraham, the father of the faithful, been saved, hundreds of years before the Mosaic law was given: and when that law was given, it was not intended to alter the nature of the salvation before promised, but only to keep the Jews a separate people, and to prepare them for the Saviour whom they were taught to expect. Thus not even to the Jews was the observance of the Mosaic ritual enjoined for the purpose of establishing a righteousness by means of it, but only to direct their attention to that Saviour, from whom alone a saving righteousness could be obtained. Yet behold, Peter undertook to change the very way of salvation itself, and to thrust from his office that adorable Saviour, who had already come down from heaven, and "purchased the Church with his own blood." Had an angel from heaven been guilty of such presumption, he had, as St. Paul tells us, deserved to be accursed[b]: What then didst not thou deserve for thine impiety, unhappy Peter, when, in committing it, thou knewest that thou wast sinning against God, and subverting the very foundations of a Christian's hope! Methinks, if Satan exulted when he had prevailed on thee to deny thy Lord and Saviour, how much more did he shout for joy when he had seduced thee so to betray the trust reposed in thee, as to give him a hope, that through thee the Saviour's kingdom should be utterly and eternally destroyed! Holy Paul, we thank thee for thy fidelity to thy fallen Brother: we thank thee for thy zeal in thy Master's cause, and for thy love to the whole Gentile world. But above all, we adore thee, O most blessed God, who didst endue thy servant with such wisdom and grace, and enable him by his timely and courageous inter-

position

[b] Gal. i. 8, 9.

position to break the snare which Satan had laid for the whole race of mankind.]

The fact thus recorded is of infinite importance on account of,

III. The instruction to be gathered from it—

Every part of this record teems with instruction. But we must content ourselves with submitting to your attention two points only; namely,

1. That salvation is solely by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, without the works of the law—

[This forms the very ground of the reproof which Paul gave to Peter. It was indeed the observance of the *ceremonial* law that gave occasion for the reproof: but the works of the *moral* law must of necessity be comprehended in the reproof itself, because it is as a subversion of the faith of Christ that St. Paul chiefly complains of Peter's conduct. The observance of the ceremonial law, as an act of obedience to God, might have been unnecessary, and inexpedient: but it could not have been of so fatal a nature as St. Paul represents it, if obedience in other respects had been meritorious before God: if it did not *add to* the merit of moral obedience, it could not so *detract from* it, as to make both that and the death of Christ also of no value: yet St. Paul speaks of it as "removing the people from the grace of Christ to another Gospel[c]," yea, "as frustrating the grace of God," and causing "the death of Christ to be in vain[d]." It was in this view, I say, as tending to establish a salvation by works instead of a salvation by faith in Christ, that St. Paul so strenuously opposed the conduct of Peter. The Apostles "*knew* that a man could not be justified by the works of the law;" and therefore they renounced all dependence on the works of the law, and looked for justification solely by faith in Christ. This, I say, they did themselves, and this they inculcated on others, as indispensably necessary to their salvation. St. Paul elsewhere tells us, that in this way Abraham was saved[e]; and David was saved[f]; and all the world must be saved[g]. But in no part of Scripture is this truth more forcibly declared than in the passage before us. We may contrive to pervert *words*, however plain they be: but here are *facts*, which we cannot get over; and which speak volumes. Let us learn then not to subject ourselves to similar reproof by blending any human works with the merits of Christ, or using our influence towards the establishment of so fatal an error.

[c] Ch. i. 6. [d] ver. 21. [e] Rom. iv. 1—5. [f] ib. 6—8.
[g] Rom. iv. 9—14. See also Rom ix. 30—33, & x. 3, 4.

error. Let us be thankful to God that we have had Reformers, who have ventured to withstand the impositions of Popery, and have, at the expense of their own lives, emancipated us from the thraldom in which he who calls himself the successor of Peter, and boasts of deriving infallibility from him, had so long held the whole Christian world. And, if there arise amongst ourselves any who would yet stand forth as advocates of human merit, let us refer them to the Articles and Homilies of our own Church; that, if they believe not the language of Inspiration, they may at least be put to shame before that Church, which has received those documents as the acknowledged symbols of her faith[h].]

2. That no consideration under heaven should lead us to compromise the truth of God—

[Peter doubtless excused himself in his own mind from an idea that his dissimulation was, in existing circumstances, *expedient*. But expediency, though worthy to be attended to by every true Christian, and in many instances a proper rule for his conduct, has no place, except in things that are otherwise indifferent. It can never warrant us to neglect a known duty, or to commit the smallest sin: for, if it could, Daniel and the Hebrew Youths might have avoided the snares that were laid for their feet. Nothing can warrant dissimulation. What we believe to be true, we must uphold and vindicate: and what we believe to be right, we must do. Neither a desire to please, nor a fear of displeasing, must cause us to swerve an hair's breadth from the path of duty. We must obey the dictates of our own conscience, and "be faithful unto death, if ever we would receive a crown of life." We cannot indeed expect that we shall never err, seeing that infallibility pertains not to our fallen nature, nor is the lot of any of the Sons of men: but if we err, it must not be through fear or through favour, but simply through the weakness incident to man in his present fallen state: and we must be especially careful that the error be not in any thing of fundamental importance. We may in our superstructure "build hay or wood or stubble," and yet ourselves be ultimately "saved, though it be so as by fire:" but, if we err in the foundation, we involve ourselves in inevitable and everlasting ruin[i]. Let us look to it therefore that we "hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints." Let nothing be suffered for one moment to move us from it. Let us bear in mind, that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." On that let us build, even on that alone, not

[h] See the 10th, 11th, and 12th Articles of the Church of England: and take for a pattern the apostle Paul. ver. 5.

[i] 1 Cor. iii. 10—15.

not uniting any thing with it, or attempting to strengthen it by any addition of our own. Let us guard against any approximation to this fatal error. Many there are, who, whilst they would abhor the thought of uniting their own merits with the merits of Christ, will yet, through a false notion of humility, not venture to trust in Christ unless they can see some measure of worthiness in themselves. But this is in reality, whatever it may be thought, a repetition of Peter's sin; and will sooner or later meet with a severe reprehension from our God. We must go to Christ guilty, that we may be forgiven; naked, that we may be clothed; polluted, that we may be sanctified: and, when we are most empty in ourselves, then shall we receive most out of his fulness. We must "know nothing but Christ and him crucified," and be contented to be nothing, that he may be "all in all."]

MVII.

THE CHRISTIAN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST.

Gal. ii. 20. *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

THE Gospel is, for the most part, plain and simple: yet are there some things in it which seem dark and contradictory. In one place St. Paul brings forward a long list of paradoxes, which to a superficial reader would appear absurd in the extreme[a]: but in all the Sacred Records there is not one so difficult of solution as that in our text[b]. The Apostle is speaking on the subject of justification by faith alone,

[a] 2 Cor. vi. 8—10.

[b] The difficulty of this passage seems needlessly increased in our Translation. The second clause of the text stands thus; ζῶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγώ· and it might be translated, "I am crucified with Christ; *and I am alive no more.*" The opposite truth then comes naturally; "I am alive no more; *but Christ liveth in me.*" The very position of the words in this antithesis seems to mark the propriety of this translation; ζῶ δὲ οὐκ ἔτι ἐγὼ· ζῇ δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός. But by putting a stop after ζῶ δὲ, we make a *double* paradox, instead of a *single* one; and, in order to complete the sense, we insert the word "*yet*," which is not in the Original. The sense, however, is much the same, whichever way the passage is translated: but one would wish rather to lessen, than increase, its unavoidable obscurity.

alone, without the works of the law: and he mentions, that he had publicly reproved Peter for sanctioning by his example the idea that the observation of the law was still necessary. He says, that the law itself sufficiently shewed us the necessity of abandoning all hopes from that, and of seeking justification by faith in Christ alone: and then adds, that, in consequence of what Christ had done and suffered to deliver us from the law as a covenant of works, he considered himself as one dead to the law, and as having all his life and all his hopes in Christ alone. This is the plain import of the passage as divested of its paradoxical appearance. But as the paradox, when explained, will be very instructive, we shall enter into a fuller consideration of it; and shew,

I. In what respect the Christian is dead—

To understand in what sense the Apostle was "crucified with Christ," we must particularly attend to the great ends for which Christ was crucified. Now Christ was crucified, in the first place, in order *to satisfy all the demands of the law*. The law required perfect obedience, and denounced a curse against every transgression of its precepts [c]. Man, therefore, having transgressed the law, was utterly, and eternally, ruined. But Christ having undertaken to restore him to the Divine favour, endured the curse which we had merited, and obeyed the precepts which we had violated: and thus rendered our salvation perfectly compatible with the honour of the Divine law; inasmuch as what we have failed to do or suffer in our own persons, we have done and suffered in our Surety. But Christ had a further end in submitting to crucifixion, namely, *to destroy sin*, and, by expiating its guilt, for ever to annul its power. This is frequently declared in Scripture, not only as the immediate end of his death [d], but as the end of the whole dispensation which he has introduced [e].

Now when St. Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ,"

[c] Gal. iii. 10.
[d] Tit. ii. 14. 2 Cor. v. 15.
[e] Rom. xiv. 9. Tit. ii. 12, 13.

Christ," we must understand, that *there was something in his experience analogous to the crucifixion of Christ;* or, in other words, that as Christ died a violent death, to cancel the obligations of the law as a covenant, and to destroy sin, so the Apostle, by a holy violence upon himself, died *to the law* as a covenant, and *to sin* as the most hateful of all evils.

The Believer then, according to this view of the subject, is dead,

1. To the law—

[Once all his hopes were founded on his obedience to the moral law; and he felt in his conscience a dread of God's wrath on account of his transgressions of its precepts. But now he abandons all his self-righteous hopes, and dismisses all his slavish fears, because he finds a better, yea, an assured, ground of hope in Christ's obedience unto death. He argues thus: 'Does the law curse me for my manifold transgressions? Christ has endured its curse for me, and therefore I have no reason to fear it[f]: "there is no condemnation to me, if only I am in Christ Jesus[g]." On the other hand, Does the law require perfect unsinning obedience in order to my justification before God? Christ has paid it that obedience, and "brought in thereby an everlasting righteousness[h]," "which is unto all, and upon all them that believe[i]." I renounce therefore all hope in my own obedience, and found all my hopes of salvation in the obedience of my blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ[k].'

To this state he is brought, partly by the law itself, which cuts him off from all possible hope from his own obedience to it[l], and partly by the death of Christ, which has totally cancelled the law, as a covenant, for all those who believe in him: so that, as a woman is released from all obligation to her husband when he is dead, and may, if she please, unite herself to another; so the Believer ceases to have any connexion with the law of God, now that it is cancelled by Christ[m]: the law is dead to him; or, to use the language of our text, he is crucified to it.]

2. To sin—

[The Believer, previous to his conversion, had no wish beyond the things of time and sense. He "walked according to the course of this world," "fulfilling the desires of the

[f] Gal. iii. 13. [g] Rom. viii. 1. [h] Dan. ix. 24.
[i] Rom. iii. 22 [k] Phil. iii. 9. Rom. v. 19. 2 Cor. v. 21.
[l] ver. 19. with Ch. iii. 24. [m] Rom. vii. 1—4.

the flesh and of the mind." He possibly might be pure from gross acts of sin; but all his actions, of whatever kind they were, sprang from *self*, and terminated in *self:* self-seeking, and self-pleasing, constituted the sum total of his life. He possessed no higher principle than self; the stream therefore could rise no higher than the fountain-head. But now he feels the influence of nobler principles, and determines to "live no longer to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. The time past suffices to have wrought his own will[n]:" and henceforth he desires to have, not only every action, but "every thought, brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ[o]." He now "crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts[p]." They form what the Scriptures call "the old man;" and this "old man is crucified with Christ, that *the body of sin may be destroyed*, that henceforth he should not serve sin[q]." Even the things that are innocent, are yet among the number of those things to which the Believer is crucified. He enjoys them indeed; (for "God has given him all things richly to enjoy;") but he will not be in bondage to them; he will not serve them; he will not regard them as constituting his happiness, no, nor as essential to his happiness: if he possess (as he may very innocently do) the pleasures, the riches, or the honours of the world, he does not set his affections upon them; he regards them rather with a holy jealousy, lest they should ensnare him, and alienate his heart from God: he sits loose to them; and is willing to part with them at any moment, and in any manner, that his Lord shall call for them: in short, he regards the world, and every thing in it, as a crucified object, which once indeed was dear to him, but which he is now willing, if need be, to have buried out of his sight. He makes a conscience of fulfilling all his duties in the world, as much, or more than ever: but since he has learned how to appreciate the cross of Christ, "the world has become crucified unto him, and he unto the world[r]." Whatever is positively sinful in it, (however dear it once was to him,) is renounced and mortified[s]; and even the most innocent things in it have *comparatively* lost all their value, and all their relish. His delight in heavenly things has rendered inferior things insipid; and his joy in God has eclipsed all sublunary joy.]

Nevertheless, the Christian lives: and to shew the truth of the paradox, we proceed to state,

II. In

[n] 1 Pet. iv. 2, 3. [o] 2 Cor. x. 5.

[p] Gal. v. 24. This is spoken of *all* true Christians without exception.

[q] Rom. vi. 6. [r] Gal. v. 14. [s] Mark ix. 43—48.

II. In what manner he lives—

That he has the same life as the unregenerate, is obvious enough: but he has also a life different from theirs; and his whole manner of life is different from theirs: he lives a new life in, and through, Christ: he lives,

1. By the influences of his Spirit—

[He once was "dead in trespasses and sins:" but that same voice which bade Lazarus to come forth out of the grave, has bidden him live. The Lord Jesus has infused into his soul a new and living principle; and has "given him that living water, which is in his soul a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." "Christ himself liveth in him," and "is his very life[t]." This accounts for his being able to do things which no other man can. In *himself*, he is weak as other men; he cannot perform a good act[u]; or speak a good word[x], or think a good thought[y]; but by the almighty operation of Christ within him he can do all things[z]. Being dead with Christ (as has been before shewn), he is risen and lives with him; according as it is written, "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him: for in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God: likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord[a]."]

2. In dependence on his sacrifice—

[The atonement of Christ is the one ground of all the Christian's hopes. If he look for reconciliation with God, it is through the blood of the Redeemer's cross: if for peace, for strength, for any blessing whatsoever, he has no other plea than this; "My Lord and Saviour has bought it for me with his blood." He views every thing treasured up for him in Christ[b]: and to him he goes, in order to "receive out of his fulness" whatsoever his necessities require[c]. His whole life is "a life of faith on the Son of God." He never goes to God but in, and through, Christ: he never expects any blessing to flow down upon him, but *for the sake of* Christ, and *through* him, as the immediate channel of conveyance. The very life which he receives from Christ, he considers as purchased for him by Christ's obedience unto death: and on that very ground he presumes to "make Christ his wisdom, his Righteousness, his sanctification, and his complete Redemption."]

3. Under

[t] Col. iii. 4. [u] John xv. 5. [x] Matt. xii. 34.
[y] 2 Cor. iii. 5. [z] Phil. iv. 13. [a] Rom. vi. 9—11.
[b] Col. i. 19. [c] John i. 16.

3. Under a sense of his love—

[The Christian is not contented with acknowledging the love of Christ to mankind in general; he views it especially as it respects himself; and delights in contemplating his own personal obligations to him. O how wonderful does it appear, that Christ should ever love such a one as him, and give himself for him! That for such a wretch as him, he should submit to all the shame and agonies of crucifixion! What incomprehensible breadths and lengths and depths and heights does he behold in this stupendous mystery! And what unsearchable riches does he seem to possess in this blessed assurance! It is *this* that animates him, *this* that "constrains him." Had he a thousand lives, he would dedicate them all to his service, and lay them down for his honour. And though he cannot perhaps at all times say, "My Beloved *is* mine, and I *am* his," yet the most distant hope of such a mercy fills his soul with joy unspeakable and glorified."]

ADDRESS,

1. Those who object to the Gospel—

[Many there are, who, when we speak of being dead to the law, imagine that we are enemies to good works, and that the Gospel which we preach tends to licentiousness. It is true, we do say, (and we speak only what the Scriptures speak,) that though the law is still in force as a rule of duty, we are free from it as *a covenant of works;* and that in consequence of being free from it, the Believer has neither hopes nor fears arising from it. But are we therefore regardless of the interests of morality? Does not the Apostle himself say, that "he, through the law, was dead to the law?" Yet what does he conclude from this? That he might live as he pleased? No: he was "dead to the law, *that he might live unto God.*" And then he repeats the same important truth: "I am crucified with Christ:" And again guards it against any similar misrepresentation, by shewing, that the Believer has a *strength for obedience* which no other person possesses, and *motives for obedience* which no other person feels. Let these two things be considered, and it will appear, that the Gospel, so far from militating against good works, is the only doctrine that secures the performance of them.

If this argument be not satisfactory, we ask the objector, What are those good works in which the Declaimer about morality excels the Believer? Yea, we ask, Whether they who renounce all dependence on their good works, be not the very people who are universally censured on account of the strictness

strictness and holiness of their lives? Away then with your objections; and know, that if the Gospel be excellent as a system, it is yet more excellent as advancing the interests of morality.]

2. Those who profess the Gospel—

[Religion consists not in the adoption of any creed, but in a radical change both of heart and life. The words before us sufficiently shew, that it is a matter of *experience*, and not of mere talk and profession. Hear the Apostle; "I am crucified with Christ;" "I live;" "Christ liveth in me;" I live by faith:" "I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave himself for me." All this has its seat, not in the head, but in the heart. Know therefore that, in order to ascertain the real state of your souls, you must inquire, not What principles you have imbibed, but How they operate; and whether in these respects you resemble this holy Apostle? Beloved, we intreat and charge you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, not to deceive yourselves with respect to this matter. To form a just estimate of your state, you must examine whether you be really dead to the law, and dead to sin; and whether, by the almighty operation of the Spirit of God within you, you are enabled to live to the glory of our blessed Lord and Saviour? These are the true tests of vital religion; and, according as your experience accords with them, or not, your state will ultimately be determined at the judgment-seat of Christ.]

3. Those who obey the Gospel—

[It appears to others, and may sometimes even to ourselves, a painful thing to experience a continual crucifixion. I confess, that the right eye being plucked out, and the right hand cut off, does imply a considerable degree of pain and self-denial. But we would ask, Whether, in those seasons when the in-dwelling operation of Christ is plainly felt, and his unspeakable love in giving himself for you is distinctly seen, the exercise of self-denial be not both easy and pleasant? We ask, Whether the joy arising from these discoveries do not far more than counterbalance any joy which you may be supposed to lose by abstaining from the gratifications of flesh and blood? We are sure that no difference of opinion can exist respecting these things, among those whose experience qualifies them to form a just judgment about them. We therefore hesitate not to say, "Be ye more and more crucified to the world and to sin:" "Live more and more by faith on the Son of God:" and let a sense of your personal obligations to him lead you to a more entire devotedness of yourselves to his service, till you are taken to serve him without ceasing in the world above.]

MVIII.

THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO ABRAHAM.

Gal. iii. 8, 9. *The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then, they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

THE point which St. Paul above all things labours to establish, especially in his Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, is the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The Jews universally were adverse to this doctrine, because it derogated, as they thought, from the honour of their law. And the Gentiles also were hostile to it, because it cut off from them all occasion of boasting in themselves. But the more the unbelieving world set themselves against it, the more this holy Apostle strove to place it beyond all contradiction or doubt. And well he might; since on the reception or rejection of it depends the everlasting salvation of every Child of man. Let it not therefore be deemed superfluous, if on a point of such infinite importance we follow him, and bring it before you in a variety of views. If we have already received it, we still need to be confirmed in it from time to time, lest by any means we be drawn aside from it. There is something "bewitching" in the idea of meriting salvation at the hands of God; and we are but too apt to listen to any statement which shall so flatter the pride of our hearts. Many converts belonging to the Churches of Galatia, after having been for a time established in the truth, were at last turned aside from it; and drew from the Apostle this spirited remonstrance; "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" He appeals to them, that the miracles which he had wrought among them, as also the miraculous powers which they had received through his instrumentality, were all in confirmation of this doctrine; by which, in fact, Abraham himself had been saved; and by which alone

alone they could ever be partakers of Abraham's felicity. This, he tells them, was the unvaried testimony of Scripture; and it had been declared two thousand years before to Abraham, in those most memorable words, "In thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

In discoursing on these words, we will shew,

I. What was that Gospel which the Scripture preached to Abraham—

Abraham was informed, that "in his Seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed"—

[This was repeatedly declared to him, and at an interval of nearly fifty years[a]. The full import of this promise was not clearly revealed in the declaration itself; but it was doubtless made known to him by the Spirit of God, and was typically represented to him in the sacrifice of his son Isaac. By the command of God, he took his own son, *the Child of Promise*, in order to offer him up as a burnt-offering to the Lord. On this his son he laid the wood which was to reduce him to ashes; he led him to Mount Moriah, (the very place where the Promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, was afterwards offered;) he bound him, and, *in purpose and intention*, offered him up a sacrifice to God: and then, having actually offered up the ram which God had substituted in the place of Isaac, he received his Son as from the dead[b]: and thus was taught, that, by the death and resurrection of the Promised Seed, the blessings of Salvation were to be brought to a ruined world. Such was the view given him of this great mystery; and by his faith in the Promised Seed so "dying for our offences, and so raised again for our justification," he was justified, as all his believing posterity shall also be[c].

Here it is particularly to be remembered, that the law bore no part in his justification; for it was not given till four hundred and thirty years after the promise of a Saviour had been made to him, and by faith in that promised Saviour he had been justified. It must be remembered also, that circumcision bore no part in his justification: for no less than twenty-four years elapsed between the period of his being justified by faith, and the appointment of that rite[d]. It is of the utmost importance that these things be borne in mind: for, if we once admit the idea of his being either in whole or in part justified by any thing but faith, we shall subvert the Gospel altogether; seeing that there is but one method of a sinner's justification

[a] Gen. xii. 3. & xviii. 18. & xxii. 18. [b] Heb. xi. 17—19.
[c] Rom. iv. 22—25.
[d] Compare Gen. xii. 3, 4. with Gen. xvii. 1, 7, 10, 23, 24.

justification *before God* for him and for us[e]. True it is, that *before men* he was justified by his obedience, as St. James has truly said[f]: for it was by the fruits which his faith produced, that it was seen to be a living, and not a dead, faith: but in the sight of God he had nothing of his own whereon to place the least dependence: it was by faith only, without any work whatever of his own, that he was counted righteous before God: and, if it had not been so, his salvation had been, not a gift of grace, but a reward of debt, to which he was entitled, and in which he would to all eternity have had a ground of glorying before God[g].]

In this promise "the Gospel was preached to him"—

[This way of salvation is emphatically and exclusively called "*the Gospel.*" It was *glad tidings* to Abraham, when taken out of an idolatrous state, and ignorant of any means of acceptance with God, to be informed, that God had provided a Saviour for him; and that, through a person who should descend from his loins, a righteousness should be brought in, fully adequate to the necessities of the whole world, and certainly effectual for all who should believe in him. To that event he looked forward; and, beholding it by faith, he greatly rejoiced in it[h]. And this is glad tidings to us also: for where should we find a Saviour, if this Promised Seed had not been given? Or what hope should we have had of ultimate salvation, if we had been required to earn it in any measure by our own works? Were it required of us to produce only one single work on which to rest our claim of heaven, where should we find one? But, blessed be God, we are taught to rely on the Promised Seed, and on him alone: and it is this very circumstance which warrants us to expect eternal happiness; since, unworthy as we are, the free promise of God, duly apprehended by faith, can never fail of its accomplishment[i].]

Such was the Gospel which the Scripture preached to Abraham: nor does it differ at all from,

II. What it preaches unto us also—

It declares to us,

1. That this is the way which God has ordained for us also—

["The Scripture," that is, the Holy Spirit who spake by it, "foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through

[e] See Rom. iv. 9—14. [f] Jam. ii. 21—23. [g] Rom. iv. 1—5.
[h] John viii. 56. [i] Rom. iv. 16.

through faith, preached this Gospel to Abraham." There was not to be one way of salvation for him, and another for us; but one and the same for both. And as God foresaw that men would be ready to catch hold of any thing that might afford in ever so slight a degree a ground of glorying, he took care to cut off all occasion for glorying, by justifying Abraham solely through faith, whilst yet he remained in an uncircumcised state: thus shewing to the uncircumcised of all nations, that, in relation to the great matter of their justification before God, they were on a perfect equality with the circumcised; and that, as faith alone was available for Abraham's salvation, so it would avail for the salvation of all who truly relied upon the Promised Seed [k]. True it is, we are to "walk in the steps of our father Abraham," and not to imagine that we can be saved by a dead inoperative faith [l]: but still it is by faith only that we become children of Abraham, and by faith only that we become partakers of his blessings [m]: if we seek these benefits in any other way, "we frustrate the grace of God, and cause the death of Christ to be in vain [n]." In the very same promise then that the Gospel was preached to Abraham, it is preached to *us*: to every one of *us* it is said, "In the Promised Seed shalt *thou* be blessed." And with this agrees the testimony of St. Paul, who, specifying distinctly all the great blessings which the Gospel offers to us, tells us, about nine times in eleven verses, that it is all "in Christ," "in Christ," "in Christ [o]."]

2. That all who embrace it shall be partakers of its blessings—

[There is no exception whatever; no difference between Jews and Gentiles: if only we "be of faith, we are from that moment blessed with all the blessings which Abraham himself enjoyed." Was he justified? So shall we be. Was he made "the friend of God?" So shall we be. Was God to him "a shield, an exceeding great reward?" Such will he be to us also. Is Abraham now "in the kingdom of his God? We also shall, with him and Isaac and Jacob, sit down there," yea, and shall be "in Abraham's bosom" to all eternity. All this, and infinitely more than we can either utter or conceive, shall we receive, if we truly believe in Christ: for "all things are ours, if we be Christ's [p]."]

From hence we may SEE,

1. The antiquity of the Gospel—

[In every age the doctrine of justification by faith only is

[k] Rom. iii. 30. [l] Rom. iv. 12. with Jam. ii. 20, 24, 26.
[m] ver. 7, 9. [n] Gal. ii. 21. [o] Eph. i. 3—13.
[p] 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

is stigmatized as a *new* doctrine: it is very generally represented as such amongst ourselves: and so it was by the Papists at the time of the Reformation: in the Apostolic age it was regarded in the same light. When "St. Paul preached Jesus and the Resurrection, it was asked, what this *new* doctrine meant[q]." But it is as old as Abraham, to whom it was distinctly preached: yea, it must be traced to the time of Adam; for to him also was it preached, when he was told that "the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." That persons who have the Scriptures in their hands should speak of this as a new doctrine, is perfectly surprising; since it is written in every page of the Sacred Volume as with a sun-beam: but that a Member of the Established Church should be so ignorant, is yet more astonishing: since it is that essential and fundamental doctrine on which the very edifice of our Church is built. Let not any therefore reject this doctrine; or at least let them not call themselves Members of the Church of England, if they do. The way of justification by faith is "the good old way" in which all the saints of God have gone from the foundation of the world; and it is the only way in which any man can "find rest unto his soul."]

2. The excellency of the Gospel—

[The idea of being saved by faith only, is so simple, that the world can see no excellency in it: but this very simplicity constitutes a very distinguished part of its excellency. Supposing that salvation had been by works, or by faith and works united, who would ever have been able to ascertain what measure of good works would suffice for us, or what measure of imperfection would consist with their ultimate acceptance? Verily, under such uncertainty, no human being could enjoy one hour's peace in the prospect of his great account: but when we are told that Salvation is by faith only, then, whatever our works may have been in times past, we have peace in our souls the very instant we believe; because we know that Christ is "able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him:" we know that "by faith we are Abraham's children;" and that "all the blessings of Abraham ARE ours," and shall be ours for ever[r].

But the excellency of the Gospel appears no less in the fruits that it produces. Abraham was justified the first moment he believed. And did he on that account become indifferent to good works? See his conduct: he immediately went forth from his family and country at the command of God, though he knew not whither he was to go. In every place where he went, he built an altar to his God: and, even when called to sacrifice with his own hands his beloved Isaac,

[q] Acts xvii. 18, 19. [r] See ver. 7. & the text.

Isaac, he hesitated not, but for three successive days prosecuted his journey to the place where the offering was to be made, and executed without reluctance the Divine command. So shall we do, if we truly believe in Christ. There will be no reserves in our hearts; nothing which we will not do, nothing which we will not sacrifice, nothing which we will not suffer, if only our God may be glorified thereby. Let the world produce a list of worthies like those recorded in the Epistle to the Hebrews, or like the holy Apostles, and shew that they were actuated by a different principle from that of faith in Christ, and then will we confess that the Gospel is not so excellent as it is said to be: but till that is done, we must affirm, that in point of practical efficacy it has no rival, and that in comparison of it the whole world is only as dung and dross.]

MIX.

THE TRUE USE OF THE LAW.

Gal. iii. 21—26. *Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for, if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But, after that faith is come, we are no longer under a school-master: for we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

THE true nature and intent of the moral law is by no means generally understood: and, if the question put by the Apostle into the mouth of an Objector, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" were addressed to the great mass even of considerate Christians, very few among them would know what answer to return to it. Hence it is that such opposition is everywhere made to the free offers of the Gospel. We have continually the very same contest to maintain against the generality of Christians, as the Apostle had against the Jews. The Apostle preached, that the Messiah, the Seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, was come;

come; and that all were how to be justified by faith in him, precisely as Abraham had been two thousand years before. The Jews maintained, that this could not be the true way of salvation; for that God had given a law to Moses; and that law was of perpetual obligation; and, if we were now to be justified by faith alone, the law would be made void, and had in reality been given to no purpose. To this the Apostle answers, that the law, which was given to the Jews alone, could not invalidate the promise which had many ages before been given to Abraham and all his believing Seed, whether among the circumcised Jews, or the uncircumcised Gentiles; and that there was no such opposition between the two as the Jews imagined; the law being in fact designed to introduce the Gospel with more effect, and to endear it to all, when it should come to be more fully revealed. This was the state of the question between the Apostle and his Opponents; to whom a complete answer is given in the words before us. The question simply was, 'Is there any real opposition between the law as given to Moses, and the promises as given to Abraham?' No; says the Apostle: there is a subserviency of the one to the other; and both the one and the other proclaim to us, *in* fact, the same salvation—salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and by faith alone.

To make this clear to the comprehension of all, I will distinctly mark what he says respecting,

I. The use of the law—

The law, when originally given to Adam in Paradise, "was ordained to life[a]," and would, if perfectly fulfilled by him, have given him a title to eternal life: but, having been once broken, it is no longer capable of giving a title to life, and is only "a ministration of condemnation and death[b]." Had it been possible to have given a law which should have rendered the salvation of *fallen* man consistent with the Divine attributes, God would never have given his only-begotten

[a] Rom. vii. 10. [b] 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9.

begotten Son to take our nature and die for us: the publication of a new law would have been so obvious and so easy, that he would undoubtedly have preferred that[c]. But no such law could be given: for, if it required the same as the original law did, namely perfect and perpetual obedience, it was impossible that that should ever be rendered to it by fallen man[d]: and, if it required less, it would dispense with obligations, which *of necessity* exist between the Creature and the Creator, and would, in fact, give a license to sin: which it is impossible for a holy God to do. The law then, as given to Moses, was not intended for any such purpose as this: it was intended,

1. To prepare men for the Gospel—

[The Gospel is a revelation of mercy through the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God: and that mercy is freely offered to all who will believe in Christ. Previously to the coming of Christ, this mystery was but very imperfectly understood: but the law as published on Mount Sinai was well calculated to prepare the minds of men for the fuller manifestation of it. For it made known to men *the true extent of their duty:* it shewed, that we were bound to love God with *all* our heart, and *all* our mind, and *all* our soul, and *all* our strength: and to love our neighbour *in all respects* as ourselves. Nothing less than this was to be paid by us from the earliest moment of our existence to our latest breath. Revealing this, it further shewed to men *the inconceivable depth of their guilt.* By this standard are we to be tried every moment: yet in no one moment of our lives have we acted up to it, either towards God or man. On the contrary, we have been at an infinite distance from it, having been altogether engrossed by *self*, and caring nothing either for God or man, any farther than the interests of *self* might be promoted by them. Thus, not to speak of any particular actions, the whole state and habit of our minds, every day, every hour, every moment, has been as contrary to the law as darkness to light, and hell to heaven. Hence the law proceeds still further to shew men their *infinite desert of wrath and condemnation.* For every single deviation from this perfect standard, the wrath of God is denounced against us; agreeably to that sentence of the law, "Cursed is *every one* that *continueth not* in *all things* that are written in the book of the law *to do* them." Consider then our duty as ramified in all its extent, and

[c] ver. 21. [d] Rom. viii. 3.

and in one single day our sins against it are more numerous than the stars of heaven, or the sands upon the sea-shore; and, of course, a proportionable weight of wrath and condemnation is entailed upon us.

Such is the light which the law reflects on our state before God: and does it not endear to us the offer of a free and full salvation? Doubtless it does: and for this end it was given, that we might the more thankfully accept the promises made to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.]

2. To shut men up to the Gospel—

[Men naturally go to the law, having no idea of obtaining salvation in any other way than by obedience to its commands. Hence the sinner, when once awakened to a concern about his soul, and sensible that he has not obeyed the law in its full extent, hopes to make a composition, as it were, and to be accepted on paying a part for the whole. But the law thunders in his ears, 'Thou must obey me in *all* things.' He then hopes, that the law will accept his repentance for past transgressions, and sincere obedience for the time to come. But the law replies, 'I know nothing of repentance, or of sincere obedience: thou must pay me my full demands, and "continue obedient in *all* things" from first to last: I have stated the extent of your duty; and I have said, "Do this, and thou shalt live." These are the only terms on which I can offer thee any thing: if thou canst not bring perfect obedience with thee, it is in vain to come to me: thou must seek a remedy elsewhere: for I can afford thee none.' Thus the law, being inflexible in its demands, and inexorable in its denunciations, compels the sinner to look out for some other way of escape from the wrath to come, and "shuts him up" to that which is revealed in the Gospel: it declares to him, that, as long as he continues to found his hopes on the law, he is, and must be, under its curse: and, just as at the first promulgation of the law, the people, trembling with apprehensions of immediate death, intreated that God would give them a Mediator, through whom they might venture to approach him; so now the terrors of Mount Sinai constrain men to look for mercy solely through the Mediation and intercession of the Lord Jesus[e]. In this view "the law was to be a school-master to us, to bring us to Christ;" it was by instruction to inform us, and by discipline to constrain us; that so the promises made to us in the Gospel might become available for their destined end.]

The law thus viewed, opens to us in all its grandeur,

II. The benefit of the Gospel—

"Before

[e] Deut. v. 23—28.

"Before faith came," and whilst the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer was but darkly and partially disclosed, the law kept men in a state of bondage, like prisoners shut up, and looking forward to a future deliverance: but, "when faith did come," and the Gospel was fully revealed, then it appeared what unspeakable mercy God had kept in store for the sinners of mankind: for by the Gospel,

1. We are liberated from the law—

[The very instant we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and lay hold on the covenant of grace, we cease to be any longer under the covenant of works. The law, *as a covenant*, has no longer any power either to command, or to condemn: it is abrogated with respect to us; yea, it is dead: and has no more power over us, or connexion with us, than a man who is dead has with the widow whom he has left behind him. This is not only affirmed by the Apostle, but is illustrated also by this very image. "If," says he, "her husband is dead, the woman is loosed from the law of her husband: so we are become dead to the law, and the law is become dead to us, by the body of Christ; yea, we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we are held[f]." And this effect is produced by the law itself; as he also tells us in the chapter preceding our text: "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God[g]:" that is, the law so utterly condemns me, that I can have no hope from it whatever, and am forced, whether I will or not, to renounce all dependence upon it, and to live no longer as one who hopes to earn life for himself, but as one who seeks only to honour and glorify his Redeemer. Hear the account which St. Paul gives of this matter in another Epistle. Speaking to those who had believed in Christ, he says, "Ye are not come unto the Mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel[h]." In a word, the moment we believe in Christ,

[f] Rom. vii. 1—6. [g] Gal. ii. 19. [h] Heb. xii. 18—24.

Christ, "We are no longer under a school-master," or as it is elsewhere said, "We are no longer under the law, but under grace[i]."]

2. We are brought into possession of all spiritual and eternal blessings—

["We are justified by faith[k];" we are "justified freely from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses[l]:" Our "sins, whatever they may have been, are put as far from us as the east is from the west[m]:" "nor shall they ever more be remembered against us[n]." Nor is this all: we are brought into the very family of God, and "made the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus[o]." Nor are we children only, but children of full age, who are "no longer under tutors and governors," but already admitted to the most intimate communion with our God, and enjoying, as far as in this world we can enjoy, the inheritance prepared for us[p].

And here we cannot but call your attention in a more especial manner to the means by which all these blessings are secured. It is again and again said, that they become ours "by faith in Christ Jesus." There is no other way: it is simply and solely by faith: there is no mixture of works: works, so far from augmenting our title to these things, or contributing to the acquisition of them, will, if wrought for this end, cut us off from all hope of ever coming to the possession of them. So inconsistent with each other are the covenants of grace and of works, that the smallest portion of works utterly excludes grace[q]; and the slightest imaginable dependence on them invalidates all that Christ has done and suffered for us. The instant we blend any thing with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we make "the promise of no effect;" and "Christ," with respect to us, "has died in vain[r]."]

And now, in conclusion, let us INQUIRE,

1. Whence is it that there is so much occasion to insist on these truths?

[Is it that there is any difficulty in them? No: in all personal matters we find it easy enough to distinguish between a gift and a debt. We are at no loss to make this distinction, if a man, who has never done one thing for us in all his life, claim a reward at our hands. It is to little purpose that he compliments us with an appeal to our generosity: the single circumstance of his founding his hope, though in a small degree,

[i] Rom. vi. 14. [k] ver. 24. [l] Acts xiii. 39.
[m] Ps. ciii. 12. [n] Heb. viii. 12. & x. 17. [o] ver. 26.
[p] Gal. iv. 1—7. [q] Rom. xi. 6. [r] Gal. ii. 21. & v. 2—4.

gree, on services which he professes to have rendered us, especially if, instead of having done us any service, he has all his days been adverse to our will and hostile to our interests, is quite sufficient to cut him off from all hope of receiving the benefits he expects. And much more may this be the case when a Sinner presumes to prefer a claim of merit before his God. For what is this but the most abominable pride? Take an illustration, which will serve to place the matter in its true point of view.—A Prince offers pardon to his rebellious subjects, provided they will sue for it through the Mediation of his Son, to whom he has committed the whole government of his kingdom. Some apply in the appointed way, and are pardoned: but others say, 'We will not accept of pardon on the terms he offers it: If the King will levy a fine upon us, we will pay it; or, if he will appoint us a service, be it never so difficult, we will perform it: but to stoop to the method which he has prescribed, namely, that of asking pardon through the Mediation of his Son, is a humiliation to which we will not submit.'—Who does not see, that pride is the principle by which these persons are actuated; and that, if they perish as rebels, it is altogether through their own fault? Know then, that it is pride, and pride alone, that keeps any from seeing the excellency of the Gospel salvation. It is pride that makes any so averse to be saved entirely by faith without the works of the law: and, till the proud hearts of men be humbled, the Gospel will always be to them a stumbling-block, and rock of offence. But be it known to you, that, how desirous soever you may be to establish a righteousness of your own, you can never do it, but must *submit* to the righteousness of God[a]."]

2. Why are we so earnest in enforcing them?

[If the present life only were concerned, we might be content to let you go on your own way. But on your acceptance or rejection of the Gospel salvation depends your happiness both in this world and the world to come. This accounts for St. Paul insisting so much on this doctrine in his Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians; and for his declaring so repeatedly, that, if they did any work whatever with a view to recommend them to Christ for justification, "Christ himself should profit them nothing." See what he says on this subject respecting his Jewish Brethren. He tells us, "that the Gentiles, who had not followed after righteousness, had attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but that Israel, who had followed after the law of righteousness, had not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? (says he:) Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law;

[a] Rom. x. 3.

law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone[t]." So it will be with all who will not submit to the righteousness of faith. If they would "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they should never be ashamed:" but if, through an ignorant zeal for the law, they will not embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as their only hope, they must inevitably and eternally perish. This is the reason that, in going through this Epistle, we bring the matter before you in such various points of view, and with such an earnest desire to fasten a conviction of it on your minds: and we intreat all to bear in remembrance the importance of the subject, and not to give sleep to their eyes or slumber to their eye-lids, till they have embraced the Lord Jesus Christ with their whole hearts, and made him "all their salvation and all their desire."]

3. Are the promises any more against the law, than the law is against the promises?

[The law, as has been shewn you, is subservient to the promises, and was given on purpose to make us more earnest in apprehending them, and more simple in relying on them. So the promises in return secure obedience to the law; as St. Paul has said, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law[u]." To this truth the whole Scriptures bear witness. "The grace of God which brings salvation, teaches us obedience[x]," and the faith that apprehends that salvation, secures it: for it "works by love," and "purifies the heart," and "overcomes the world." The state into which we are brought by the promises, precludes a possibility of our living in any wilful sin[y]: it would be contrary to the very idea of our being servants of Christ, to render service to that which he so abhors. A spiritual man cannot endure the thought of so grievous an inconsistency[z]. On the contrary, the promises afford him encouragement to aspire after universal holiness, because, whilst they set him free from all slavish fears, they assure him of a constant supply of grace and strength proportioned to his necessities[a]. Hence, apprehending and living upon the promises, he will "cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God[b]." Let this then appear in all our lives: so shall it be seen beyond all contradiction, that, though we build not on our works, we diligently perform them; and that the doctrine we profess is in truth "a doctrine according to godliness."]

[t] Rom. ix. 30—31.
[u] Rom. iii. 31.
[x] Tit. ii. 11, 12.
[y] Rom. vi. 1—7.
[z] Rom. vi. 15, 16.
[a] 2 Cor. xii. 9.
[b] 2 Cor. vii. 1.

MX.

THE TIME AND MANNER OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION.

Gal. iv. 4, 5. *When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

THE advantages which we as Christians enjoy above the Jews are exceeding great. The Jewish Church was like an heir to a large estate during the years of his minority: he has indeed bright prospects before him; but at present he receives no more than what his guardians judge necessary for his use, and suited to his condition. "He, in fact, differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all:" for he is altogether "under the controul of tutors and governors, till the time appointed by his father," whose possessions he is to inherit. We, on the contrary, are like the same person when arrived at full age, having perfect liberty from servile restraints, and entering into the complete enjoyment of the inheritance, to which by our Father's will we are entitled. In this view St. Paul himself has illustrated the subject in the chapter before us. Having in the preceding verses described the state of the Jewish Church, he declares, in the words of our text, the superior privileges which, through the incarnation of the Son of God, we enjoy.

To bring the whole subject under your consideration, it will be proper to notice the *time*, the *manner*, and the *end* of our Saviour's incarnation.

I. The time—

It may seem strange that, when God had promised to send his Son into the world, he should delay the execution of that promise four thousand years. But it does not become us to sit in judgment upon God's proceedings; it is sufficient for us to know that he cannot err. But, in relation to the point before us, we may observe, that the time when our Lord came into the world, was,

1. The

1. The time fixed in the Divine counsels—

[When the promise of a Saviour was given to our First Parents, nothing was specified respecting the time. Hence Eve (as it should seem) imagined that her first-born child was he: for she named him Cain (which signifies *getting*); intimating, that "she had gotten a man from the Lord," or rather, that she had gotten *the* man, the Lord [a]. Nothing seems to have been declared concerning the time of the Messiah's arrival, till it was revealed to Moses, that "the sceptre should not depart from Judah, till Shiloh should come [b]:" and it is remarkable, that a separate jurisdiction did depart from all the other tribes several hundred years before Christ's advent; but that Judah retained it, in a measure, even during the captivity in Babylon; and never completely lost it, till Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the whole Jewish polity was dissolved.

After the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, it was revealed to the prophet Haggai, that the Messiah should come while that temple was standing; and by his presence in it should add greater glory to it, than the former temple, with all its magnificence and peculiar appendages, possessed [c].

But that which marked the period with most precision, was the prophecy of Daniel, which declared, that in seventy weeks (of years), or four hundred and ninety years, from the command given by Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem, the Messiah should be cut off [d]. This determined the time with such accuracy, that the expectation of the Messiah's advent was very general among the Jews, when our Lord made his appearance upon earth.

Thus the fulness of the time was come, because it was the time ordained by God in his eternal counsels, and made known to the world by his holy prophets.]

2. The fittest time—

[If our Lord had come into the world at an earlier period, several valuable purposes would either not have been answered, or not in so eminent a degree. By the delay, there was abundant proof given, how little could be done *by reason, with all its improvements;* or *by the law, with all its sanctions;* or *by the most signal judgments and mercies.*

Reason had attained its summit. The learning of Greece and Rome had left nothing to be added for the perfecting of the human intellect. Yet what did all their boasted philosophy effect? Were the habits and dispositions of men meliorated? Was the dominion of sin broken, or virtue made more generally

[a] Gen. iii. 1.
[b] Gen. xlix. 10.
[c] Hag. ii. 7, 9.
[d] Dan. ix. 24, 25.

generally prevalent throughout the world? Read the account which St. Paul gives of the Heathen world: and judge[e].

God had been pleased to re-publish his *law*, in a way calculated to awe his people, and secure their obedience to it. He had enforced it with the most solemn sanctions; and had himself written it on tables of stone, in order that it might not any more be mutilated and forgotten, as it had been when left to the uncertainty of oral tradition. And did this succeed? No. The Jews had nothing to boast of above the Gentiles. St. Paul draws their character also, and shews that they, with all their advantages, were as far from God and righteousness as the Heathen themselves[f].

The interposition of the Deity had also been displayed in a visible series of *mercies and judgments*, correspondent to the moral conduct of his people. Not only had thousands and tens of thousands been struck dead at a time for some great offence, but even the whole nation were sent into a miserable captivity for seventy years. On the other hand, their restoration from captivity had been so miraculous, as evidently to bear the stamp of Omnipotence upon it. These things did lead the Jews to renounce idolatry: but how far they prevailed to introduce general habits of piety and virtue, may be seen in the awful unanimity which prevailed among them in rejecting and crucifying the Son of God.

No fitter time therefore could have been chosen for the sending of this last remedy, than when all other remedies had been fully tried, and their inefficacy had incontrovertibly appeared.]

The next thing to be noticed respecting the incarnation of Christ, is,

II. The manner—

Though Christ was God equal with the Father, yet in his Mediatorial capacity he acted as the Father's Messenger or Servant. The Father sent his Son,

1. "Made of a woman"—

[This expression would have been superfluous if applied to any mere man; but, as applied to the Lord Jesus, it is peculiarly important. Our adorable Saviour was not born like other men; but was formed in the womb of a pure virgin by the operation of the Holy Ghost: and this was necessary on many accounts.

If Christ had been born in the ordinary way of generation, he would have been comprehended in Adam's natural posterity,

[e] Rom. i. 22—32. [f] Rom. ii. 17—29.

terity, and would therefore have been involved in the same curse as all others are on account of the first transgression; for "in Adam all died;" and "through his disobedience many were made sinners," even all who were represented by him as their covenant-head. Moreover, he would have been corrupt, as all others are; for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" But, not deriving his existence from man, he could not be ranked among the Sons of Adam; and, being formed by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost, he was perfectly immaculate.

This miraculous mode of conception and birth was farther necessary, in order to fulfil the prophecies: for in the very first promise that announced God's gracious intentions to the world, it was said that "the Seed of the *woman* (not of the man, but of the woman) should bruise the serpent's head[g]." It had afterwards been more plainly declared, that "a virgin should conceive, and bear a Son, whose name should be called Emmanuel," God with us[h].

Hence the expression in the text marks at once, that Christ was fitted for his Mediatorial office; and that he is the very person fore-ordained from the foundation of the world to sustain and execute it.]

2. "Made under the law"—

[Not being represented by Adam, and not inheriting his defilement, Christ was not under the *curse* of the law: but, being born of a Jewish parent, he was under the *authority* of the law, as well the ceremonial as the moral. The law was to him, as it was to Adam in Paradise, a covenant of life and death. The covenant made with Adam was for himself and all his natural posterity: that which was made with Christ, was for himself and all his Spiritual Seed. Now, Adam, by violating the covenant, had entailed a curse on all his descendents. To remedy this evil, two things were to be done: the curse due to us was to be endured; and a new claim to heaven was to be established for us. For these two purposes Christ was fitted, when he was sent into the world: He was sent "made of a woman only," that, not being himself obnoxious to the curse of the law, he might bear the curse for us; and that, fulfilling all the demands of the law, he might "bring in an everlasting righteousness," which should be imputed to us, and placed to our account[i].

If we attend to the various circumstances of his life and death, we shall find that he actually fulfilled the law in every particular. He fulfilled the *ceremonial* law both *actively* and *passively*: *actively*, by submitting to circumcision, by attending the

[g] Gen. iii. 15. [h] Isai. vii. 14. Matt. i. 23.
[i] Dan. ix. 24. Rom. iii. 21, 22.

the stated feasts, and by complying with the Mosaic ritual in all its parts: he fulfilled it also *passively*, by accomplishing every thing which was there prefigured, and by exhibiting in himself the substance of every thing which the Mosaic ritual had shadowed forth[k]. He fulfilled also the *moral* law, obeying it in its utmost extent, insomuch that not a spot or blemish could be found in him. In short, as "it became him to fulfil all righteousness," so he did fulfil it; and, being "made under the law," he resigned not his breath till he could say in reference to all that the law required of him, "It is finished[l]."]

The incarnation of our blessed Lord remains yet further to be considered, as it respects,

III. The end—

We may say in general terms that he was sent,

1. To redeem us from guilt and misery—

[The Jews alone were under the *ceremonial* law, and therefore they alone can be said to have been delivered from the yoke which that law imposed upon them. But the whole human race are under the *moral* law: they are under it as a covenant, which, having been once violated, denounces only its curses against them, without affording them the smallest hope of mercy[m]. Now the Lord Jesus Christ came to redeem us from the law; and to establish a new covenant for us, by embracing which we are released from the covenant of works, and brought into a perfectly new state. This new covenant offers us life upon totally different terms from those which were proposed under the old covenant: the old covenant said, "Do this and thou shalt live:" the new covenant says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved[n]." The very instant we lay hold on the new covenant, the old covenant is cancelled with respect to us: It cannot *condemn* us, because its penalties have been inflicted on our Surety: It cannot *command* us, because we are not under its jurisdiction. *As a rule of duty*, it retains its authority; but, *as a covenant*, it is altogether abrogated and annulled[o]. Thus through the incarnation and death of Christ we are redeemed from the condemnation we have merited by our past transgression of the law, and from all obligation to stand or fall by the terms which that law prescribes.]

2. To exalt us to happiness and glory—

[Our blessed Lord had yet higher ends in view when he became incarnate. He came to restore us to all the blessedness from which we had fallen. By creation we were Children of

[k] Col. ii. 17. [l] John xix. 30. [m] Rom. iii. 19. Gal. iii. 10.
[n] Rom. x. 5—9. with Acts xvi. 31. [o] Gal. ii. 19. Rom. vii. 1—4.

of God: but, when sin entered, that relation ceased; and we became "children of the devil." This being our state, Christ came, that through him we might again return to the family of God. Though we are by nature strangers and aliens, we may receive through him the adoption of Sons, and be regarded by God as dear children. We are expressly assured that this privilege is given to all without exception who believe in Christ[p]. What is implied in this privilege, the Apostle states in the two verses following the text. He specifies both the *present* and *future* benefits of this adoption. *In this world*, instead of having any occasion to dread the wrath of God, we may look up with filial confidence to him, "crying, Abba, Father;" and may expect from him all that care, and love, and mercy which are suited to the relation of a father. *In the eternal world*, we shall be raised to such dignity and glory as no words can express, no imagination can conceive. "Being sons, we are heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ:" and whatever God or Christ possess either of happiness or glory, shall be possessed by us, according to the degree of our meetness for it, and the measure of our capacity to enjoy it.

"This honour have all the saints;" and that they might enjoy it in its fullest extent, was the design of God in sending his dear Son into the world.]

INFER,

1. The folly of adhering to the law—

[Men, in seeking salvation by the works of the law, have no idea what folly they are guilty of. What should we think of a man, who, when offered an estate which had been purchased for him at an immense price, should decline accepting it as a gift, and should prefer the making a stipulation to earn it, and that too by labours which a thousand men were not able to perform? Yet that were wisdom when compared with a rejection of the Gospel, and a seeking of salvation by the works of the law; because it is impossible for fallen man to be saved by the covenant of works: and, if Christ had not redeemed us from that covenant, we must all have perished together. Will any of you then be so mad as to adhere to that covenant, when God sent his own Son to redeem you from it? You think indeed by this to shew your zeal for good works; but it is a zeal which is not according to knowledge[q]; and a zeal which will only leave you, as it left the self-righteous Jews, destitute of any part in the salvation of Christ[r]. We would not discourage your zeal for good

[p] John i. 12. [q] Rom. x. 2, 3. [r] Rom. ix. 30—32.

good works: we only wish to give it a right direction. Obey the law; but obey it with proper views. Renounce your dependence upon it as a covenant of works, and seek salvation by faith in Christ. Then shall you receive that Spirit of adoption, which will make the service of God to be perfect freedom, and afford you ample scope for your most active exertions.]

2. The blessedness of receiving the Gospel—

[What an astonishing transition does that soul experience, which is delivered from the terrors of Mount Sinai, and brought into "the liberty of the Children of God!" From being harassed with the dread of God's wrath, and impelled by servile fears to irksome, unsatisfying, ineffectual labours, how delightful to behold the face of a reconciled God and Father, to feel a holy boldness and confidence before him, and to anticipate the joys of heaven! This is not a picture which is drawn by a warm imagination: it is a reality; it is the experience of thousands; it is in a greater or less degree known to all who believe in Christ. Seek then, my Brethren, this happiness. You can easily conceive the difference between the labours of a slave under the lash of the whip, and the services which an affectionate child renders to an indulgent parent: You can see that even *at present* their states are exceeding different. Such is the difference between those who are under the law, and those who embrace the Gospel. But what will be the difference hereafter? "*Now*, Believers are the Sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what they shall be: but we know that, when they shall see Christ in glory, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is[s]." Let all of us then believe in Christ, that "we may see the good of his chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of his nation, and give thanks with his inheritance[t]!"]

[s] 1 John iii. 2. [t] Ps. cvi. 5.

MXI.

A MINISTER'S CHIEF WISH FOR HIS PEOPLE.

Gal. iv. 19, 20. *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.*

THE pastoral relation is described in the Scriptures by images well calculated to convey an idea of anxious

anxious concern, and fond endearment. St. Paul sometimes speaks of himself as "the father" of his converts, as "having begotten them through the Gospel[a];" and sometimes as their mother, "travailing in birth with them." Corresponding with these images, are the feelings of a Minister's heart in reference to his people. If he see them in a sick and dying state, he will not be indifferent about their recovery, but will, with parental tenderness, administer such instruction and advice as may conduce to their welfare. There are too many indeed, who, from an affectation of candour, hope well concerning the states of all their people. But the faithful Minister dares not to act on such delusive principles: he knows the danger to which the unconverted are exposed, and the awful responsibility of his own office; and therefore he will faithfully discharge his duty, and "divide to every one the word of truth," consoling or reproving them as occasion may require.

In the words before us, we see,

I. What a Minister chiefly desires on behalf of his people—

As a parent rejoices to see his children prospering in bodily health and worldly circumstances, so a Minister is glad to see his people free from sickness and distress. He is thankful too, if he behold an outward reformation among them, and a diligent attendance on ordinances, and the establishment of family prayer, and a decided approbation of the Gospel record. But all this falls very far short of his wishes. He never is satisfied respecting them, until he have a clear evidence that "Christ is formed in them,"

1. As a vital principle in their hearts—

[Whatever they may have, or whatever they may do, they have no spiritual life, till "Christ liveth in them[b]." If "Christ dwell not in their hearts, they are no other than reprobates[c]." "Christ is the life" of the soul, as much as the soul is the life of the body[d]. He animates all our faculties; and without

[a] 1 Cor. iv. 15.
[b] Gal. ii. 20.
[c] Eph. iii. 17. 2 Cor. xiii. 5.
[d] Col. iii. 4.

out him they are as incapable of spiritual exertions as a breathless corpse is of performing the functions of a living body[e]. "Christ in us is the hope of glory[f];" and all profession of religion, without the in-dwelling of his Spirit in our souls, is only like the motion and re-union of the dry bones, before God has breathed into them a principle of life[g].]

2. As a visible character in their lives—

[Concerning the quickening of a soul, we can judge only by its actions. While therefore a Minister desires that his people may be really alive to God, he looks for the fruits of righteousness as the proper evidence of their regeneration. He expects to find "Christ formed" in their tempers, their spirit, their whole conduct. He is not contented to behold such virtues as may be found in heathens: he longs to see in them a victory over the world, a supreme delight in God, an unwearied exercise of all holy and heavenly affections. He is satisfied with nothing but an entire "renovation after the Divine image[h]," and a "walking in all things as Christ walked[i]."]

But as this change is rarely so satisfactory as might be wished, we proceed to shew,

II. When he has reason to stand in doubt of them respecting it—

In every place where the Gospel is faithfully preached, there are some of whom the Minister may enjoy a full and confident persuasion of their acceptance with God. But there will also be some respecting whom he must feel many anxious fears. This will be the case, wherever he sees them,

1. Fluctuating in their principles—

[The Galatians had been warped by means of Judaizing teachers, and turned from the simplicity of the Gospel[k]: and on this account the Apostle "feared he had bestowed upon them labour in vain[l]." It is much to be regretted, when godly persons are distracted by "matters of doubtful disputation." They always, in a greater or less degree, "suffer loss" by means of it, because their attention is divided, and the energy of their minds, in reference to their more important concerns, is weakened. But when, as in the case of the Galatians, their doubts relate to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, their danger is exceeding great. They shew that they

[e] John xv. 5. [f] Col. i. 27. [g] Ezek. xxxvii. 7—10.
[h] Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10. [i] 1 John ii. 6.
[k] Gal. i. 6, 7. & iii. 1. [l] ver. 9—11.

they are only "children, when they are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine[m];" and their want of establishment in the faith gives reason to fear lest they should be finally overthrown[n].]

2. Unsteady in their conduct—

[Such was the state of the Galatians. When the Apostle was with them, they were "zealously affected with good things[o]:" but now he was absent from them, their love to him, and to the truth itself, had cooled; and their zeal was turned into a very different channel[p]. No wonder then that "he travailed in birth with them again," since they betrayed such fickleness of mind. Thus, wherever we see a zeal that is only *occasional in its exercise*, or *partial in its operation*, we may well "stand in doubt of" such persons. If the ardour of their minds decay, or be called forth chiefly about the non-essentials of religion; if they are more occupied about Church-government than about the government of their own tongues; and more offended at the miscarriages of their brethren than at the evils of their own hearts; if they are violent about doctrines, and remiss in practice; there is but too much reason to groan and tremble for them. They are "like a cake not turned," (doughy on one side, and burnt up on the other,) alike unacceptable both to God and man[q]. And it is to be feared that they will prove at last to be only hypocrites and apostates[r].]

Such doubts must needs be painful in proportion to the regard we feel for our people's welfare, and the importance of the object which we desire on their behalf. Every Minister therefore should inquire,

III. By what means he may most effectually promote it in them—

Waving other things which might be mentioned, we shall notice two, which more immediately arise from the text; namely,

1. A personal intercourse with them—

[The evils arising from *the non-residence of Ministers* is incalculable[s]. But a Minister may reside in the same place with his people, and yet profit them very little, if he have not a private acquaintance with them, and frequent conversations with

[m] Eph iv. 14. [n] Heb. xiii. 9. [o] ver. 18.
[p] ver. 14—17. [q] Hos. vii. 8. [r] Matt. xxiii. 23, 24.
[s] This should be fully stated, if this text were the subject of a discourse preached before the Clergy.

with them on the concerns of their souls. His public Ministrations cannot be sufficiently particular to enter into the views and feelings of all his congregation. Errors may become inveterate in their minds, before he knows any thing about them. We do not impute blame to the Apostle for not abiding with the Galatians; because his commission was to preach the Gospel throughout the world: but we are well assured, that the Judaizing teachers would never have gained such an ascendancy over them, if he had abode with them as their stated Pastor. His presence would have been more advantageous to them than a hundred letters; on which account he says, "I desire to be present with you now." Let Ministers then avail themselves of this advantage; and the people give them every opportunity of access to them.]

2. A suiting of his address to their respective cases—

[When the Apostle was with the Galatians, he comforted and encouraged them. Now in this Epistle he warned and reproved them: and if, by conversing with them, he could restore them to their former state, he would gladly "change his voice," and speak to them again in terms of approbation and confidence. He would adapt himself to the state of every individual, distinguishing the different degrees of criminality that were found in each, and "giving to each his proper portion of consolation or reproof, as the season" or occasion required[t]. In this way ought Ministers to address their people. The speaking only in a general manner leaves the greater part of our hearers in an ignorance of their real state. We should descend to men's business and bosoms. We should "warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak[u]." We should answer the objections, solve the doubts, and rectify the errors, of our people; and, by suitable instructions, confirm them in the faith. It is in this way only that we can enjoy much satisfaction in them, or expect to have them as "our joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of judgment[x]."]

ADDRESS,

1. Those of whom we stand in doubt—

[Think us not uncharitable on account of the fears we express: "we are jealous over you with a godly jealousy[y]:" If we felt as we ought, we should be pained and distressed as a woman in her travail, while we see any of you in a doubtful state. We must desire to see in you what we know to be essentially necessary to your salvation: and while we behold any

[t] Luke xii. 42.
[u] 1 Thess. v. 14.
[x] 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.
[y] 2 Cor. xi. 2.

any allowed and habitual deviations from the Gospel, whether it be in principle or practice, we must warn you of your danger. Would you have us tell you that you are safe, when we are doubtful whether Christ be formed in you? When we observe one proud, another passionate, another covetous, another unforgiving, another censorious, another formal, would you have us satisfied respecting you? Surely our anxiety about you is the best proof of our love: and we earnestly intreat you all "to judge yourselves, that ye may not be judged of the Lord[z]."]

2. Those of whom we entertain no doubt—

[Where shall we find persons of this description? Where? alas! in every place. Can we stand in doubt about the swearer, the Sabbath-breaker, the whoremonger, the adulterer? Can we stand in doubt of those who live without secret prayer; of those who never felt their need of having Christ formed in them, nor ever endeavoured to conform themselves to his example? No: infidels may stand in doubt; but they who believe the Bible cannot doubt at all[a]; the state of all such persons is as clear as the light at noon-day; and their inability to see it, only proves how awfully "the God of this world hath blinded their eyes." We must declare unto you, Brethren, and would speak it with tears of pity and of grief[b], that, if you die before that Christ has been formed in you, "it would have been better for you that you had never been born[c]."

But there are others also of whom we cannot doubt; I mean, the humble, spiritual, devoted "followers of the Lamb." Of these even infidels entertain no doubt; because, upon their own principles, they who are most virtuous are most safe. But they have also the word of Jehovah on their side: And, if we were to stand in doubt of them, we must doubt the states of all the holy Prophets and Apostles, whose faith they follow, and whose example they imitate. No: in such as them are found "the things that accompany salvation[d]." We congratulate them therefore on the safety and happiness of their state: and "we are confident that he who hath begun the good work in them, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ[e]." They may indeed have sometimes doubts and fears in their own minds: but we say unto them, in the name of the Most High God, "Fear not, little flock; for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom[f]."]

[z] 1 Cor. xi. 31.
[a] Gal. v. 19—21. Eph. v. 6.
[b] Phil. iii. 18.
[c] Matt. xxvi. 24.
[d] Heb. vi. 9.
[e] Phil. i. 6.
[f] Luke xii. 32.

MXII.

THE PRINCIPLES OF FLESH AND SPIRIT CONSIDERED.

Gal. v. 17. *The flesh lusteth against the Spirit; and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

IT might be naturally imagined, that, from the moment of our conversion to God, the transformation of the soul into the Divine image should proceed so rapidly, as soon to extirpate sin altogether. But God has not seen fit so to carry on his work in his people's hearts. The Canaanites were not rooted out of the land at once, but "by little and little[a]:" and so it is with our spiritual enemies: they have strong holds, from which they cannot be expelled, but by means of a long protracted warfare. They remain, to be "thorns in our eyes and in our sides;" and ultimately in a more conspicuous manner to subserve the glory of God in their final extirpation. The best of men have yet within them two contrary and contending principles; the one being used by Satan as an instrument for the defeating of God's gracious purposes towards them; the other being employed by God for the furthering and securing of their eternal welfare. To what an extent the conflict between the two is sometimes carried, may be seen in the Galatian converts, many of whom betrayed by their contentious dispositions how great an ascendant the evil principle yet retained over them, notwithstanding all the professions of piety which they made, and the distinguished advantages they enjoyed. The Apostle did not mean to extenuate, and much less to excuse, the sinfulness of their instable and contentious conduct; but he exhorts them to walk more entirely under the influence of the Holy Spirit, as the only means of securing them against the evil propensities which they had manifested, and of carrying on unto perfection the good work that had been begun in them[b].

In

[a] Deut. vii. 22. with Numb. xxiii. 55. [b] ver. 16.

In speaking of the two principles mentioned in our text, we shall notice,

I. Their united existence—

There yet remains in God's people an evil principle, which is here designated by the name of "flesh"—

[Man, since the fall of our First Parents, is born into the world a corrupt creature: for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" He is depraved in all the members of his body, and in all the faculties of his soul: there is no part which is not defiled and debased by sin: the understanding is become dark; the will perverse; the affections sensual; the conscience seared; the memory retentive only of things that are gratifying to the carnal mind. However this depravity may be checked by grace, it is not extirpated: it remains like the infection in the leprous house, and will remain till the house itself is levelled with the ground.]

But there is also in them a new heaven-born principle, which is called "Spirit"—

[This is spoken of by our blessed Lord as contra-distinguished from the other, and in precisely the same terms: "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit[c]." Under the term "flesh," he includes all that we bring into the world with us, and all that characterizes us *as men:* but the "Spirit" is that which makes and designates us *new men*, or "new creatures in Christ Jesus." Indeed, it is called "the new man," as the other is "the *old* man;" and is "a renewal in the Spirit of our mind," after the very image of our God, in righteousness and true holiness[d]." This new principle is infused into the soul at the time of our regeneration; and it is, if I may so speak, the seminal principle of our conversion. At the instant of its infusion into the soul, we are "quickened from the dead," and "pass from death unto life." Previously to the communication of it to us from above, we are like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision: we may have the form of men, but we are not living men: it is not till we have received that, that "Christ liveth in us;" but then "Christ himself becomes our life[e]." Now this principle co-exists with the former: it does not at once expel the former; nor is itself barred out by the former: but it enters into, and occupies, the whole man, even as the former did; and, according to the measure in which it is imparted, it communicates light to the understanding, submission

[c] John iii. 6. [d] Eph. iv. 22—24.
[e] Gal. ii. 20. & iv. 19. & Col. iii. 4.

sion to the will, heavenliness to the affections, tenderness to the conscience, and to the memory a tenacious apprehension of all that is good. From the time of its existence in the soul, it becomes a second *self*, a *spiritual self* as distinguished from the *carnal self*; agreeably to what the Apostle has repeatedly said for the purpose of distinguishing the more fully the actings of the two contrary principles: "It is no more I that do this evil, but sin that dwelleth in me[f]."]

Both these principles being strong and active in the soul, we will consider,

II. Their contrary operations—

The flesh is always striving to regain its former ascendancy over us—

[The members of our bodies are but its agents and instruments: the chief seat of its residence is the soul; in every faculty of which it works, to "bring forth fruit unto death." In the understanding, it suggests proud reasonings against the revealed will of God, prompting us to dispute the authority of his precepts, the truth of his promises, the justice of his threatenings, and the wisdom of that mysterious plan of Redemption which he has devised for the recovery of fallen man. In the will, it stirs up rebellion against him, and a determination to follow "its own corrupt and deceitful lusts." In the affections, it magnifies the things of time and sense, so as to make them, if not the only, at least the chief, objects of its pursuit. In the conscience, it produces such blindness and partiality, as to force from it a sentence of condemnation or acquittal, not according to truth, but according to its own predominant habits and inclinations. Nor does the memory escape its baneful influence, being filled by it with all manner of corrupt images, which from time to time it presents to the imagination, as the means of corrupting the heart, and enslaving the soul.

The better principle, on the other hand, protests against all the workings of the flesh, and presents to the mind such considerations as are calculated to awaken the tempted soul to a sense of its guilt and danger. Especially it reminds the soul of the obligations it owes to God the Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ for all the wonders of redeeming love, and provokes it to high and heavenly pursuits. What is said of the Holy Spirit may also be said of this divine principle which is formed in the soul; namely, that "when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit lifts up a standard against him." The standard of the cross especially is that by which it calls forth into activity all the powers of the soul, and unites

[f] Rom. vii. 17, 20.

unites them in the service of their God. The reflux of a tide may not unfitly illustrate its operation on the soul. The flesh, like a majestic river, runs with irresistible impetuosity towards the ocean, till the tide begins to flow; and then, from an invisible but mighty influence, its waves are staid, till by degrees its current is turned back again towards the source from whence it emanated. This in the material world is but the process of a few hours; but in the spiritual world it is the work of the whole life. The dominance of the flesh is exhibited in the progress of the river to the ocean; the conflicts and triumphs of the Spirit are depicted in the reversal of its course, and the progress towards the fountain-head.]

In this however the illustration fails, that when the tide has once overcome the resistance of the river, the conflict ceases: but it is not so with the Christian's conflicts: *they* continue to the end: and may perhaps be better compared with a conflagration which is opposed by engines, where the supply of water is scarcely equal to the demand: sometimes the fire yields to the well-directed stream; and at other times it breaks forth with renewed fury, and seems to defy the efforts of those who would arrest its progress. This, I say, will place in the justest view the operations of the two principles within us, and enable us to comprehend,

III. Their combined effects—

Acting always in opposition the one to the other, they prevent us from following either to the extent that we should, if there were but one principle within us. Through the simultaneous actings of each,

1. We do not serve *sin* as we *did*—

[We did follow it with constancy and alacrity, and without remorse. But not so now. The better principle will not admit of it. Like the angel that was sent to Balaam, it presents itself in our way to obstruct our course; and, if we overcome it on one occasion, it will meet us again, and renew its opposition till it has prevailed. Nor can we now so easily run into evil. Sin now appears to be sin, and consequently to be an object of aversion and dread: and, though its solicitations may prevail, we yield to them rather as a captive that is dragged against his will, than as persons following the bent and inclination of their own hearts. Now too we can no longer

longer wipe our mouth, like the adulteress, and say, What evil have I done[g]? Remorse and shame are now the followers of transgression: and an evil thought now occasions more pain in the soul, than formerly the perpetration of the act. Thus the corrupt principle, though not extirpated, is obstructed, and ceases to maintain an undisputed sway.]

2. Nor do we serve *God* as we *would*—

[The renewed soul pants after universal holiness: it would be pure as God is pure, and perfect as God is perfect. It would believe every word of God without the smallest hesitation or doubt: but unbelief creeps in, and weakens the energy of our faith. We would love God with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; but the contracted soul cannot expand itself to the occasion. We would draw nigh to him in prayer and praise, and hold most intimate fellowship with the Father and the Son, but the heart "starts aside as a deceitful bow," and, like a bird entangled in a snare, is incapable of executing its most ardent desires. In a word, the renewed soul would be satisfied with no exertions, however great; no services, however eminent; no enjoyment of God, however intimate: it aspires after absolute perfection, and a total transformation into the Divine image. But, alas! its attainments fall infinitely short of its desires, and it is constrained to cry, "O that I had wings like a dove! then would I flee away and be at rest!"

That this is no false representation of the Christian's state, may be seen from the account which St. Paul himself gives of his own experience. Of the united existence of these two principles, and of their contrary operations within him, and of their combined effects, he speaks at large in the seventh chapter to the Romans: "He had a law in his members warring against the law of his mind," and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin, which was in his members:" "When he would do good, evil was present with him;" so that "the good which he would, he did not, and the evil which he would not, that he did." "To will indeed was present with him; but how to perform that which was good, he found not." Hence, feeling himself like a poor captive chained to a putrid corpse, which he was compelled to drag about with him to the latest period of his existence, he brake forth into this mournful complaint, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death[h]?"]

From this subject we may draw many important *lessons*.—It is of USE,

1. For instruction—

[How

[g] Prov. xxx. 20. [h] Rom. vii. 14—24.

[How shall I know whether I am a Christian indeed? Shall I know it by a freedom from all anxieties, or by a deliverance from all sin? No; but by an earnest anxiety about the soul, and an incessant conflict with sin and Satan. A body, when dead, is insensible, whatever be the state to which it is reduced: and, if the soul be insensible of its state, it is a proof that it is dead also. A living soul trembles at the Divine judgments; labours to obtain a well-founded hope of peace with God; flees to the Lord Jesus Christ for refuge, and cleaves to him with full purpose of heart. Being united unto Christ by faith, the Believer enlists under his banners, and, as a good soldier, heartily engages in a conflict with all his enemies. Never for a moment will he turn his back; he may be wounded, but he will not yield; he may be beaten down, but he will rise again to renew the combat: he will never put off his armour, till he is crowned with victory, and beholds "Satan himself bruised under his feet."

Now, if we will ascertain our real state before God, let us inquire, What we know of this spiritual warfare? Is it begun? Is it carried on yet daily? Are we like soldiers in a camp, watching with all care, withstanding firmly the assaults of our enemies, and in our turn vigorously pursuing them to their strong holds, and suffering none to approach us with impunity? Yes, verily, if we are Christians indeed, we are "warring a good warfare," and "fighting the good fight of faith." There may be, as in earthly campaigns, short seasons of comparative ease: but if we truly belong to Christ, this is our one business, our one employment, to walk in the Spirit, and to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts[i].]

2. For consolation—

[No man can be engaged in this warfare without feeling deeply humbled on account of the strength and number of his corruptions. Many will be his sighs, his tears, his groans: yes, "even they who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even they will groan within themselves," will "groan, I say, being burthened[k]," longing to get rid of their corruptions, and to have "mortality, with all its attendant evils, swallowed up of life[l]." But, if sin be our burthen, it is at least a comfort to us to reflect, that we are enabled to feel it a burthen: for there was a time, when it was harboured and indulged without remorse. This too is a source of comfort, that, in this struggle within us, the younger shall prevail[m]; "however sin may have abounded, grace shall much more abound; and as sin has formerly reigned unto death, so shall grace ultimately reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ

[i] Gal. v. 24, 25.
[k] Rom. viii. 23.
[l] 2 Cor. v. 4.
[m] Gen. xxv. 23. Rom. v. 12.

Christ our Lord [n]." Doubtless the conflicts will be painful to flesh and blood: but by them shall the soul be trained for heaven, and be made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Go on then, stripling as thou art, Believer, against the Goliath that menaces thy existence: and know that thou shalt be "more than conqueror through him that loveth thee;" and that, in an assured anticipation of the issue, thou mayest enter into the combat, singing, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"]

3. For direction—

[Whatever your attainments be, "*walk humbly with God.*" Were you as perfect as Job, it would still become you, on account of your remaining corruptions, to acknowledge yourselves "vile," and to "repent and abhor yourselves in dust and ashes." ——— *Be watchful too against your spiritual enemies.* With hearts so deceitful and corrupt as yours, and in the midst of an ensnaring world, surrounded too by myriads of evil spirits, whose devices none but God can understand, how can you hope to maintain your stedfastness, if you stand not upon your watch-tower, and guard against every motion of your corrupt nature? ——— And *never for a moment turn away your eyes from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Where can you wash away your past iniquities, but in the fountain of his blood? Or where can you obtain grace sufficient for your daily necessities, but out of the fulness which is treasured up for you in him? ——— Lastly, *continue instant in prayer.* Nothing can come to you but in answer to prayer; (for "if you ask not, neither will you have;") nor shall any thing be wanting to you, if only you ask it of God for Christ's sake. Examine your own hearts, or inquire of others what their experience has been, and you will find it invariably true, that your victories or defeats have been proportioned to your urgency in prayer, or your remissness in that holy duty. As in the days of old, whilst Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed; but when his hands hanged down, success was transferred to Amalek; so it is in every age, with every saint. Watch therefore unto prayer: continue instant in prayer: "give unto your God no rest day or night:" plead with him: wrestle with him as Jacob did: and you shall find "your inward man renewed day by day," till the work of grace that has been begun in you is perfected, and consummated in glory.]

[n] Rom. v. 20, 21.

MXIII.

THE FRUITS OF THE FLESH AND OF THE SPIRIT CONTRASTED.

Gal. v. 19—24. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

THROUGHOUT this whole Epistle we have mention made of two covenants, under the one or other of which all mankind are of necessity comprehended, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. Those who are under the covenant of works are under the curse of God as transgressors: but those who are under the covenant of grace, are delivered from that curse through the Mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has become a curse for them[a]. The transition from the one state to the other is effected solely by faith[b]. But faith is an operation of the mind wholly invisible to men, and but too liable to be mistaken even by ourselves. How then shall it be ascertained either by others or ourselves to which of these covenants we adhere? We are told, that, on the transition from the one to the other, we are endued with a new and vital principle, under the influence of which we from that moment begin to live. The principle which rules in us under the former state, is called "flesh;" and that which animates us under the latter, is called "Spirit." Not that on the transition from the one state to the other, the former principle is taken away: No: it lives, and acts, and withstands with all its might the latter principle, and prevents it from operating so successfully

[a] Gal. iii. 10—14. [b] Ib. ver. 25, 26.

fully as we could wish: but still it is progressively weakened in its operations: and by the dominance of the better principle we know that we are no longer under the law, nor exposed to the curse which the legal covenant entails on all who are cleaving to it.

Thus we have somewhat of a criterion whereby to judge of our state: but still that criterion is of no farther use than as we have a distinct view of the fruits which the two opposite principles will produce: let these be clearly marked, and then no further difficulty will arise: We have only to examine our works, of what kind they are; and then we shall arrive at a certain conclusion as to our state before God: for, as "a good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit, nor a corrupt tree good fruit," we shall know the quality of the tree by the fruit which is produced by it.

This satisfaction then is afforded us by the Apostle in the words before us: in which we see,

I. The works of the flesh—

In enumerating them, the Apostle mentions,

1. Those which stand in more immediate connexion with *the body*—

["Adultery" is an evil against which even heathens in all ages have felt the deepest indignation. "Fornication" was not regarded by them in so heinous a light: Would to God the malignity of it were duly appreciated even by the Christian world? But God views these evils with the utmost abhorrence; and not the *acts* only, but the *dispositions* from which they spring: "Uncleanness and lasciviousness," if cherished in the heart, are marked by him with the same displeasure as the acts to which they lead; because the *indulging* of them in word, in look, in thought, indisputably proves, that it is not the fear of God that keeps them from breaking out into more open acts, but some other consideration totally distinct from a regard to him: since the fear of God, if operating at all, would operate as much to the suppression of the desire, as to the non-indulgence of the act. Hence the mere looking on a woman to lust after her, is declared, on infallible authority, to be an actual commission of adultery with her in the heart. Now all these acts and dispositions proceed from a corrupt principle within us, even from that principle which

which is called "flesh," and which is the true source of all the other evils we commit.]

2. Those which more properly have their seat in *the mind*—

[Of these, some have a more immediate reference to *God*, and others are called forth only in our intercourse with *men*. Of the former kind are "idolatry and witchcraft," which being specified as "works of the flesh," clearly shew what we are to understand by "flesh;" namely, not merely any corporeal propensity, but that general propensity to evil which operates throughout the whole extent of our fallen nature.

"Idolatry" is a total rejection of God; and "witchcraft" is an application to evil spirits, to impart to us something which we have no hope of obtaining from the true God: and both the one and the other of these is properly a "work of the flesh," inasmuch as it betrays a total alienation of heart from God, and an entire subjection to that "carnal mind," which, as God himself declares, "is enmity against him [c]."

The other evils which are called forth by our intercourse with *men*, as "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like," form such a picture of our fallen nature as may well humble us in the dust before God. It is unnecessary to enter into a distinct consideration of them: it is in the aggregate only that we can stop to notice them at this time: but what an accumulation of evil do they present to our view! Yet is it no other than what we may see in every community under heaven. Look at the seditions that agitate States; the divisions and heresies that disturb the Church; the feuds and quarrels that set man against his fellow man, and often terminate even in "murder" itself: whence do they all arise? Come they not hence, even from the lusts that war in our members [d]? or, in other words, from the corruption of the human heart? There are some evils which pass under the milder name of good fellowship, and conviviality; some which, like the "revellings" that were common among the Heathen, consist of feastings, dancings, and excess of every kind: but, however we may soften them down by specious names, and plead for them as innocent amusements, they are all hateful to God, and destructive to man: insomuch that the man who finds his pleasure in them "can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven." Often had the Apostle entered his protest against such carnal indulgencies, so unworthy of a rational Being, and so unsuited to persons standing on

[c] Rom. viii. 7. [d] Jam. iv. 1

on the brink of eternity. Can we conceive, that if man had retained his primeval innocence, he would have found delight in any such things as these? If the ungodly themselves saw pious people seeking their happiness in such things as these, would they see no incongruity between their professions and their occupations? Yes: they would be the first to proclaim the hypocrisy of such professors: which is itself an acknowledgment that the things themselves are adverse to piety, and inconsistent with it.

Know then, that all these and "*such like*" evils, whether arising from the body, or emanating from the mind, are decidedly to be ranked under "the works of the flesh," "which whosoever doeth shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Unwelcome as this declaration was to the carnal man, St. Paul hesitated not to make it repeatedly, and in the strongest terms: and we also, if we will approve ourselves faithful to God and to the office committed to us, must proclaim the same awful truth, and forewarn all, that, if they continue under the power of any of the hateful dispositions before specified, or seek their happiness in the things of time and sense, they will inevitably and eternally exclude themselves from the kingdom of heaven.]

In contrast with these, the Apostle proceeds to enumerate,

II. The fruits of the Spirit—

And here he mentions,

1. Those which have their sphere of action chiefly within our own bosoms—

[The very mention of them marks at once their nature and their origin—"Love, joy, peace!" Whence come they? Are they the offspring of our corrupt nature? No: Nature never bare such fruits as these: these spring from that divine principle, which is imparted to us by the Spirit of God at the time of our regeneration and conversion. Then love springs up in the soul: love to God; love to Christ; love to man for Christ's sake. Then also does a "joy with which the stranger intermeddleth not," a "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ," a joy in the testimony of a good conscience, a joy in the prospect of a glorious immortality, transport the soul: and its ebullitions, which, if continued, would exhaust the strength of our animal frame, subside into a peaceful composure, a sweet serenity of mind, a "peace of God which passeth all understanding." These are the never-failing fruits of divine grace in the soul. A variety of circumstances may occur which may impede the exercise of these holy affections; especially the workings of a corrupt nature, still striving to bring us into captivity to sin, may occasionally prevail

prevail to damp our joy and interrupt our peace; but according to the measure of the grace given unto us, will be the fruits of that grace abounding in the soul.]

2. Those which have a more immediate relation to our fellow-creatures—

[Towards them, both the active and passive virtues are called forth by incidents of daily occurrence. "Long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith (or fidelity), meekness" have a constant scope for exercise, as also "temperance" has, both in the desire of earthly things, and in the enjoyment of them. Here again it is not necessary to enter minutely into these different virtues: it is the collective body of them which characterizes the true Christian, and marks, beyond a possibility of doubt, the excellence of the principle from which they spring.

"Against these there is no law." Not one word is there to be found in all the holy Scriptures that condemns the productions of these fruits. Were they condemned, our blessed Lord and Saviour must fall under condemnation; since he maintained and exercised these virtues to a degree never equalled by mortal man. It is impossible to yield these fruits too much: the more we abound in them, the more we resemble the Lord Jesus Christ, and the more do we evince a meetness for the heavenly inheritance.]

Now comes the point to be determined; namely, What is,

III. The Christian's state in reference to them both—

The description given of Christians must not be overlooked—

[There is no periphrasis by which they can be more fitly described, than that given in our text, "They that are Christ's." This is their title universally; and it belongs to them alone. They were from eternity given unto Christ by the Father; as Christ himself says, "Thine they were; and thou gavest them to me[e]." They have been purchased by Christ himself, as his peculiar possession: and they have given up themselves to him by a willing and deliberate surrender of all that they are and have. By a vital union also are they his, being, as it were, "one spirit with him." Hence in many parts of Scripture are they designated as in the words of our text: "All things are yours; and ye are Christ's[f]:" and again, "If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's[f]." Blessed distinction! glorious

[e] John xvii. 6, 9, 11, 12, 24. [f] 1 Cor. iii. 23. & 2 Cor. x. 7.

glorious privilege! Believer, think of thyself under this character, and then see what obligations thou owest to God for this unspeakable mercy, and "what manner of person thou shouldest be in all holy conversation and godliness."]

Their state is suited to this high character—

["They have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Crucifixion, it must be remembered, is a lingering death. The thieves who were crucified with Christ poured forth their venom against him, even whilst they were suspended on the cross. Thus also, "the old man in Believers is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin[g]:" nevertheless it is not utterly extinct: it still lives; and still rages and rebels against Christ; and would, if suffered to come down from the cross, regain its former ascendency. But there it is fixed: and thence it never shall come down, till the body itself shall cease to live. All its affections and all its desires, though still possessed of considerable strength, are checked in their operation, and restrained in their exercise. "The Spirit" now reigns: the new affections now put forth a vigour, which "the flesh" can no longer withstand. The warfare is indeed continued: but victory declares itself on the side of the better principle; so that, whereas the Believer formerly "walked after the flesh," he now in his daily life and conversation "walks after the Spirit," and progressively advances in his heavenly course as long as he continues in the world[h]. "His path is like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."]

SEE then from hence,

1. How blessed is the influence of the Gospel!

[By the Gospel this change is wrought. And, to form an estimate of the change, paint to yourselves the countenances of the Jews when they met on the day of Pentecost with their hands yet reeking with the Saviour's blood; and the same persons on the evening of that day, when they were "eating their bread with gladness and singleness of heart, blessing and praising God:" methinks, heaven and hell scarcely present a greater contrast, than those very persons within that short period. Yet such is the change which the Gospel will produce, wherever it is received in deed and in truth. Hear how the prophet Isaiah describes it: "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the

[g] Rom. vi. 6. [h] Rom. vi. 20, 22. with viii. 1, 4.

the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off[i]." Oh, Beloved, see that this change take place in you: for to effect it is the glory of the Gospel; and no further than this change is wrought in you, have you any evidence that you belong to Christ.]

2. How vain are the expectations of carnal professors!

[Frequently does the Apostle characterize as "carnal," those who are yet under the power of unholy tempers and affections. Look, thou professor of godliness, and see what thy conduct is, in the family, the Church, the State. Art thou a favourer of feuds, of heresies, of seditions? Take off thy mask, and proclaim thyself an hypocrite. Thou hast no part nor lot in the salvation of God. Yet rest not here: but go on to examine how far all holy tempers and heavenly affections abound in thee: see whether thou livest in the habitual exercise of love, joy, peace; and whether thy whole walk be marked by long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance? See whether in these things thou resemblest Him whose property thou professest thyself to be, even that blessed Jesus who requires thee to walk as he walked? Know of a certainty, that, "if thou walkest after the flesh, thou shalt die; but if through the Spirit thou mortifiest the deeds of the body, then, and then only, shalt thou live[k]."]

3. How desirable is it to obtain an interest in Christ!

[All this will he do for those who truly believe in him. Came he, think you, to save you from hell only? No: he came to "save you from your sins." He came to make you new creatures; and to transform you into the Divine image, in righteousness and true holiness. Seek then an interest in him. Give up yourselves to him, to be washed in his blood, and to be renewed by his Spirit. Do this, and you shall have no cause to complain that your corruptions are invincible: for his grace shall be sufficient for you, even though your corruptions were ten thousand times more powerful than they are. Nor imagine that the maintenance of holy tempers and affections shall be such an impracticable task as Satan would represent it to be: for the love of God shed abroad in the heart shall render every thing easy. Only receive the Lord Jesus Christ into your hearts by faith, and he will work effectually within you, as he does in all his saints: "He will fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work

[i] Isai. lv. 12, 13. [k] Rom. viii. 13.

work of faith with power; and so shall the name of our Lord Jesus Christ be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ[1]."]

[1] 2 Thess. i. 11, 12.

MXIV.

AGAINST SELF-DECEIT.

Gal. vi. 3—5. *If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another: for every man shall bear his own burden.*

SELF-KNOWLEDGE is at the root of all true religion. Without that, we shall have no right disposition, either towards God or man. Without that, we shall not be able to pity the fallen, or sympathize with the afflicted; but shall be alike unfeeling towards the failings and the necessities of our fellow-creatures. But, if we are duly conscious of our own weakness, we shall be ready to "restore in meekness any brother that has been overtaken with a fault:" and, if we know our own desert, we shall most willingly labour to "fulfil the law of Christ, in bearing the burthens of others," as He has borne ours. To cultivate self-knowledge therefore is, in this view, extremely important: but more especially is it so in the prospect of that judgment which God himself will shortly pass on every Child of man: for, whatever be our estimate of our own character, it is not by that, but by God's own view of us, that our state shall be determined to all eternity. This is plainly declared in the words before us; in which we may see,

I. An evil complained of—

The entertaining too high an opinion of ourselves is a common evil; I should rather say, is an evil co-extensive with the human race, with those at least who have not been converted by the grace of God. If it be asked, Whence does this evil arise? I answer,

1. From

1. From judging ourselves by a defective standard—

[The generality take no higher standard than that which custom has established in the place where they live: and if they conduct themselves agreeably to that, they consider themselves as having fulfilled all that can reasonably be required of them. They never once suspect, that to "walk according to the course of this world is to walk according to the prince of the power of the air," or that "the broad road is that which leadeth to destruction." They have satisfied others; and therefore they have satisfied themselves.

But some take a far higher standard, even the law of God itself, as far as they understand it, and aim at obedience to the whole will of God. But they take only the letter of the law; and if they abstain from the actual commission of murder, adultery, and theft, they imagine that they have no reason to reproach themselves with any violation of the commandments which forbid those crimes. Hence, like the Young Man in the Gospel, they will recite the commandments, and say, "All these have I kept from my youth up: What lack I yet?" This was the source of Paul's self-deception, in his unconverted state. He knew not the spirituality of the law; and therefore he imagined himself to be alive, whilst he was really dead, with respect to all spiritual obedience[a]. He thought himself to be something, when he was nothing; and thereby deceived himself.]

2. From comparing ourselves with others—

[Some look at those who are of the same rank and age with themselves: and, if they fall not below them, they conclude that they are right. Others look at those rather who live without any particular regard to morals: and, from seeing a manifest superiority in themselves to these, they will with self-complacent air say, in their hearts at least, if not with their lips, "I thank thee, O God, that I am not as other men are, or even as this Publican." Others again will compare themselves with the religious world. They will select those who have in any respect dishonoured their holy profession, and hold them forth as a proper specimen of all. Or they will take the more defective part of a good character, and represent it as exhibiting a just picture of the man himself. In doing this too they will believe all they hear, without any examination or inquiry: they will make no allowances for any thing as arising out of peculiar circumstances: they overlook entirely all the humiliation and contrition which in a real saint follows the commission of a fault: they will go further still, and

[a] Rom. vii. 9.

and impute all this evil to wilful and deliberate hypocrisy: and then they will bless themselves that they are at least as good, if not better than those who make so much profession of godliness; yea, *therefore* better, because they make no such profession.

But to these we may apply what the Apostle said of the false teachers at Corinth; "They measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise [b]." For what have they to do with others? It is not by any comparative goodness that their character will be estimated. Whether they be better or worse than others, they are in God's sight precisely what they are in themselves: and, whilst they form a judgment of themselves by the relative situation which they occupy in the scale of general goodness, they only deceive their own souls.]

3. From comparing our present with our former state—

[It may be, that at an early period of our lives we were gay and dissipated: and that since that time we have reformed, and become observant of many duties. Yet still we may be very far from a state that is pleasing and acceptable to God: we may even (and it is no uncommon case) be more odious in his eyes than before, by having become more inflated with pride and self-confidence, in proportion as we have reformed our external conduct. For what is this, but to exchange "fleshly for spiritual filthiness," and to acquire the image of Satan in proportion as we have relinquished that of the beast? But, waving this circumstance, which may or may not exist, the question is, not what reformation we have experienced, but what yet remains to be reformed? It matters little that the outward conduct is changed, if the heart remains the same. If we are not "new creatures in Christ Jesus," we have attained nothing to any good purpose: and, if we look with complacency on any change short of that, we fancy ourselves something when we are nothing, and fatally deceive ourselves.]

4. From judging under the influence of partiality and self-love—

[Self-love blinds us: it hides from us our faults; or puts such a specious gloss upon them, that they are scarcely discerned as faults. It magnifies our virtues too, and not unfrequently represents as virtues what in reality are grievous sins. If there be any point in our character that is more favourable, as generosity, or benevolence, or any other good quality, self-love represents that to us as constituting almost the whole of our character, and then fills us with self-complacency in the con-

[b] 2 Cor. x. 12.

contemplation of it. Thus it was with the Pharisees of old, who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous," whilst in the sight of God they were no better than "whited sepulchres." And thus it will be with all of us, until God open our eyes to see things as they really are, and give us hearts to judge righteous judgment.]

But for this evil there is in our text,

II. A remedy prescribed—

God has given to us an unerring standard of right and wrong—

[In the holy Scriptures, he has revealed to us his mind and will, and shewn us what is that state which becomes us, as creatures, and as sinners. As creatures, we ought to love him with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. As sinners, we ought to humble ourselves before him in dust and ashes; to lay hold on the covenant which he has made with us in the Son of his love; to seek for mercy solely through the atoning sacrifice of Christ; to live by faith on Christ, receiving out of his fulness as branches from the vine; and by the influences of his Spirit to bring forth fruit to his glory. And, to form a right estimate of our character, we must try ourselves by this standard: we must see how far we are observant of his law, and how far we are obedient to his Gospel.

But besides this written standard, we have a copy of all perfection set before us in the example of Christ. We see how ardent and uniform was his zeal for God, and how active and self-denying his love for man. We see him in all situations of difficulty; we behold all his tempers and dispositions tried to the uttermost by the perverseness and cruelty of men; and we see in every thing how to conduct ourselves towards God and man. In his example, we have a touchstone whereby to try our supposed virtues: and, whereinsoever we differ from him, or come short of him, (unless in those things which arose out of his Mediatorial character,) we may assuredly conclude that we are wrong.

Further, though the word of God, and the example of Christ, are the only unerring standards of truth, we have yet further,—what is of great advantage to us,—the examples of men who were of like passions with ourselves. We see Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, all walking, as it were, before our eyes; and we learn from them how we ought to walk and to please God. If we take the life of Abraham, of Daniel, of the apostle Paul; if we contemplate their unshaken faith, and unreserved obedience; and then inquire how we have demeaned ourselves under any circumstances which have

have borne an affinity with theirs; we may certainly attain a pretty correct knowledge of our state and character before God.]

By this standard then we should try ourselves—

[It is of use to all persons, and under all circumstances. From the king on the throne to the beggar on the dunghill, all may find it suitable to their condition. To it therefore we should refer the whole of our conduct, and by it "every one should prove his own work." Every particular work should be tried by it. Whatever the work be, we should examine what the written word required of us, and see how far our work fell short of the true standard. We should bring it to the test, and inquire into *the principle* from which it flowed, *the manner* in which it was executed, and *the end* for which it was performed; and then form our judgment, after a candid and impartial survey of its defects.

But it is not our actions only that should be so proved: we should examine also the entire state and habit of our minds: for it is this, and this only, that will determine our real character before God. And who that does this will think highly of his own attainments? Who that considers what is that love which is due to the Supreme God; what is that gratitude which the Lord Jesus Christ calls for at our hands; what is that affiance which we should place in him; and what is that zeal which we should put forth in his service; who, I say, will then vaunt himself as somebody, and swell with self-preference and self-conceit? The remedy once brought into daily and habitual use, will soon cure the evil complained of in our text.]

What the Apostle thought of this remedy, appears from,

III. The prescription eulogized—

A more valuable prescription could not be given either,

1. As it respects our present happiness—

[To what purpose is it to be applauded by others, even though we were held forth as patterns of all that is great and excellent? It might please our vanity; but it would afford us no solid satisfaction, whilst we are afraid to bring our conduct to the only true test. What comfort would a merchant feel at hearing that he was reputed rich, if his affairs were so embarrassed that he dared not examine his accounts, and knew not but that he was on the very verge of bankruptcy? So is the man, who, whilst he is extolled by his fellow-creatures,

creatures, is averse to learn what is said of him by his God. On the contrary, the man who tries himself by the standard of God's word, and finds that, amidst innumerable defects, he is on the whole upright before God, he "has his rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." He lives not on the testimony of his fellow-creatures: his comfort is independent either of their censure or applause. He rejoices in the testimony of his own conscience, as the apostle Paul did [c]. He "has the witness in himself:" and "the Spirit of God also witnesses with his Spirit," that he is a "Child of God." O what an advantage is this, under every situation and circumstance of life! Are we in a state of prosperity? We shall make no account of our wealth or honour in comparison of the testimony of a good conscience. Are we in adversity? Our spirit will be buoyant in a sea of troubles; we shall know assuredly that all things are working together for our good, and that, "light and momentary in themselves, they are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."]

2. As it respects our eternal welfare—

[Whatever others may think of us, or we may think of ourselves, it will not at all influence the judgment of our God: "for not he that commendeth himself will be approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth [d]." The works that are applauded of men, may be recorded in his book of remembrance as splendid sins: and the works that are condemned by men, may be put to our account as services greatly to be rewarded. The very same judgment which the written word pronounces now, our God will pronounce hereafter. Hence, in bringing ourselves continually to this standard, we know what will be approved in the last day, and what sentence to expect at the mouth of a righteous Judge. There will doubtless be many actions which will be erroneously judged by man, and the precise quality of which we ourselves also are at present unable to discover: but, whilst we are conscious of an unfeigned desire to please and honour God, we shall say with the Apostle, "It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self: but he that judgeth me is the Lord [e]." "My own heart does not condemn me; and therefore I have confidence towards God [f]." Whilst practising this habit, we shall be attentive to every thing we do. We shall preserve a tenderness of conscience: we shall spy out readily any thing that has been amiss. We shall, from a sense of the imperfection of our very best deeds, wash them daily in the fountain of Christ's blood, and never hope

[c] 2 Cor. i. 12. [d] 2 Cor. x. 18. [e] 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.
[f] 1 John iii. 19—21.

hope for the acceptance of them but through his atoning sacrifice, and his all-powerful intercession. Thus, whilst all, who refer their actions to any inferior standard, delude their own souls, and "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath," the careful Christian attains a just knowledge of his own state, and accumulates "a weight of glory," which "the Lord, the righteous Judge," shall confer upon him in exact proportion to the services he has rendered to his God[f]. Here we are called to bear the burthens of others; and frequently to groan under burthens that are unrighteously cast upon us: but in the day of judgment, both the one and the other of these will be removed from us, and we shall "bear that only which is properly our own:" "we shall reap precisely what we have sown: if we have sown to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption; and, if we have sowed to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting[g]."]

ADDRESS,

1. Those who form too favourable an opinion of their state—

[Do not imagine that we wish unnecessarily to disturb your peace. We would to God that "your peace might flow down like a river!" All that we are anxious to do, is, to keep you from resting in undue security, and "saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace." When we intreat you to stop and try yourselves, and to prove your own work, what do we but consult your truest happiness both in time and in eternity? We desire to bring every one of you to a state of holy joy, even to "a joy which no man can take from you," "a rejoicing in yourself alone, and not in another." Let me then say to you, as the Apostle does, "Let not any man think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but think soberly[h]:" and again, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves[i]." It is in this way only that you can attain self-knowledge, or be delivered from self-deception. Think what you will of yourselves, "you are nothing," nor ever can be any thing, but poor, weak, guilty creatures, indebted to the free grace of God alone for all your hope and all your salvation. Even St. Paul, whilst declaring that "he was not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles," confessed that "he was nothing." Let the same mind be in you, and you will find the salvation of the Gospel sweetly suited to your souls.]

2. Those who form too unfavourable an opinion of their state—

[Some

[f] 1 Cor. iii. 8. Heb. xi. 26. [g] ver. 7, 8.
[h] Rom. xii. 3. [i] 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

[Some there are, who, when they see how far they have departed from God, are ready to imagine that they have sinned beyond the reach of mercy, and that, with respect to them, Christ has died in vain. But no man is warranted to say, that his state is desperate; nor ought any man to come to such a conclusion after the strictest search. There is one distinction which ought never to be forgotten: it is this; that whatever grounds sin affords for humiliation, it affords none for despondency. If there were not a sufficiency in the blood of Christ to cleanse from the guilt of sin, we might well despair: or, if there were not a sufficiency in the grace of Christ to rescue from the power of sin, we might justly say, There *is* no hope: but, whilst we are assured that Christ "*is* able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him," we need not fear, but that if we go to him, he will receive us; and if we trust in him, he will glorify himself in our salvation. Attempt not then to hide from your own eyes the extremity of your guilt; nor, when it is revealed to you, indulge any desponding fears: but flee unto Christ, and lay hold on him, and cleave to him, and determine, that, if you perish, you will perish at the foot of his cross, trusting in his blood, and pleading with him that promise, "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."]

3. Those who are enabled to form a just estimate of their state—

[These persons are a perfect mystery to all around them. The world sees them humbling themselves as the very chief of sinners, and yet exulting under a sense of God's pardoning love; and how to reconcile this they know not. 'If,' say they, 'you are so vile, how can you rejoice? and, if you have such cause for joy, how is it that you yet sigh, and mourn, and weep, as if you were the vilest of mankind?' But it is this union of humility and confidence which characterizes the true Christian: and, the more eminent the Christian is, the more do both these graces flourish in his soul. Thus then, Brethren, let it be with you: affix no limits to your self-abasement; for it is not possible for you ever to have too humiliating thoughts of yourselves: yet, on the other hand, let there be no limits to your confidence in Christ, as able, and willing to save the very chief of sinners. Yet, at the same time, do not imagine, that, because you are vile in yourselves, you are at liberty to indulge in sin; or because "in Christ you are complete," you are not under any necessity of practising universal holiness: these would be fatal errors indeed: were any such licence given you, "Christ would be a Minister of sin." But this is far from being the case. It is true, that you

[k] 2 Cor. xii. 11.

you are justified by faith alone: but by your works will you be judged: and the measure of your works will be the measure of your reward.]

MXV.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

Gal. vi. 14. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

THE Christian, in whatever he does, is characterized by singleness of eye and simplicity of mind. All others, even when they appear most zealous for God, have sinister and selfish ends in view: this may be seen in the Judaizing teachers, whilst they were insisting on the observance of circumcision and the Jewish Ritual. They wished to have it thought, that they were actuated only by a conscientious sense of duty to Moses, and to God: but there were other secret motives by which they were impelled: they were themselves Preachers of the Gospel; but knowing how obnoxious both to Jews and Gentiles the simple preaching of the cross was, whilst the blending of certain observances with it was palatable to every mind, they sought to avoid the persecution which they knew that a simple exhibition of Christ crucified would bring upon them. They had an eye also to their own glory: for they affected to be leaders of a party in the Church, and laboured to exalt themselves by augmenting the number of their followers. That they were not actuated by a real desire to approve themselves to God, was evident from hence, that they, notwithstanding all their endeavours to enforce the observance of the law on others, did not keep the law themselves. But all such corrupt practices St. Paul abhorred; and, whilst he disdained to seek his own glory, he was proof against the fear of man, and laboured only to advance the glory of his Divine Master, and the salvation of those to whom he ministered: "*They*," says he, "who constrain you to be circumcised, desire to make a fair shew in the

the flesh:" "but God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!"

In this commendation of the cross of Christ, we behold,

I. His views of its excellency—

By "the cross of Christ," is here meant the doctrine of salvation through a crucified Redeemer. This he preached, and it was the great subject of all his Ministrations. Though it was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness," yet he would "know nothing else[a]," and "glory in nothing else." He gloried in it,

1. As displaying such wonders of love and mercy to the world at large—

[Here was a plan of salvation suited to, and sufficient for, the necessities of the whole world. All were involved in one common ruin: all needed an atonement to be offered for their sins: the whole universe could not present one capable of expiating their guilt; the highest archangel was as incompetent to it as was the blood of bulls and goats. But God, of his infinite mercy, had devised a way: he had entered into covenant with his only-begotten Son: he had agreed with him, that, if he would assume our nature, and "make his soul an offering for sin," his sacrifice should be accepted in their behalf, and he should have from amongst the fallen race of Adam a seed, who should serve him, and enjoy him for ever[b]. This stupendous plan has been executed: the Lord Jesus Christ has "been made in the likeness of men, and has become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross:" and, having "borne our sins in his own body on the tree," and been exalted to the right hand of God as the Head and Forerunner of his people, he now offers salvation unto all freely, "without money and without price." The persons sent out and commissioned by him to preach his Gospel, are empowered to declare, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them[c]." To every living man is this message sent, with a full assurance, that "they who believe in Christ shall never perish, but shall have eternal life[d]."

Now in this wonderful mystery St. Paul saw such honour reflected

[a] 1 Cor. ii. 2.
[b] Isai. liii. 10.
[c] 2 Cor. v. 19.
[d] John iii. 16.

reflected on all the Divine perfections, and such blessedness secured to man, that he could not but glory in it, and determine never to glory in any thing else.]

2. As making such ample provision for his own soul—

[St. Paul felt himself to be the very "chief of sinners," and deserving of God's heaviest indignation. But this Saviour had revealed himself to him, even in the midst of all his wickedness; and by a signal act of grace had not only pardoned his sins, but had appointed him to preach to others that salvation, of which he was so remarkable a monument. By the manifestation of Christ to his soul, he was assured of mercy and acceptance with God. From that moment he no more doubted of his own salvation, than he did of his existence: and the blessing which was thus imparted to him, he had been the means of imparting unto others, even to hundreds and thousands of the Gentile world. Could he then be insensible of the value of that which had filled his own soul with such peace and joy, and which, through his Ministrations, had diffused such unspeakable blessings all around him? No: he could not but commend to others what had been so effectual for his own benefit, and glory in the cross as "all his salvation, and all his desire."]

As an especial reason for glorying in the cross, he mentions,

II. His experience of its power—

The words, "by *whom*," should rather be translated, "by *which*;" for it is to *the doctrine* of the cross as received into his soul, and not to Christ's personal agency upon his soul, that he traced the effects produced.

The world was in the Apostle's eyes as an object that was crucified; himself also being as one crucified in respect of it—

[The image here used is very remarkable, and deserving of particular attention, "The world was crucified to him." A person dying upon a cross, how dear so ever he may have been to us, is no longer an object of desire. As soon as he has surrendered up his life, if his body be given to us, we bury it out of our sight. We no longer look to him for any of those comforts which are derived from social intercourse: all relation to him, all dependence on him, all satisfaction in him, are dissolved: every tie that once bound us together, is broken, and "we know him no more." The Apostle further adds,

adds, that "he also was crucified to the world." This does not mean, that the world despised *him*, and wished *him* buried out of its sight: (that indeed was true; but it is not the truth that is here intimated:) the expression imports, that, whilst the world was as a crucified object in his eyes, he beheld every thing in it as a man would do who was himself dying on a cross. He may have loved the world in ever so high a degree; but he now loves it no more. He may have sought its pleasures, its riches, and its honours with the most insatiable ardour; but he has now no desire after any thing that is in it. He feels himself dying; and he has now no wish but to improve his few remaining moments, for his own benefit, and the benefit of those around him. Take the penitent thief as an example. If crowns and kingdoms could have been given him for the few remaining hours that he had to live, they would have been of no value whatever in his eyes.

Now thus the Apostle looked upon the world and every thing in it. There was nothing in it that he desired: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," were all lighter than vanity, in his estimation: he had now no longer any taste for them: he felt that, whether his life was of longer or shorter continuance, he had nothing to do, but to honour God, and benefit his fellow-creatures, as far as he should have opportunity, and seek the salvation of his own soul. All that the world could either give or take away, was "counted by him as dung, that he might win Christ, and be found in him."]

And whence was it that he attained such extraordinary deadness to the world?

[This holy feeling was wrought in him altogether by the cross of Christ; which brought such glories to his view, as eclipsed all sublunary good; and filled his soul with such joys as rendered all earthly satisfactions worthless and distasteful as the husks of swine. This it was which raised him above those vain hopes with which the Judaizing teachers were animated, and above those unworthy fears with which their fidelity to God was assailed. A sense of "love to his Redeemer constrained him;" and, when menaced with all that the world could inflict, he could say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may but finish my course with joy, and fulfil the Ministry committed to me." Nor was this a vain boast: his whole life testified, that it was his actual experience; and that the doctrine which formed the only basis of his hopes, had a transforming effect, such as no other principles under heaven could produce.]

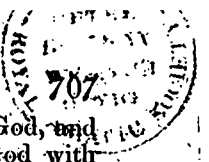
But we must not suppose this state of mind to be peculiar to the Apostle: it is produced invariably by the cross of Christ, wherever it is surveyed and gloried in as it ought to be. We may SEE therefore from hence,

1. How sublime are the Christian's views!

[The cross of Christ is that, and that alone, in which every Christian under heaven will glory. The very words of our text afford the best comment on that description which the Apostle gives of the cross of Christ, when he calls it, "The wisdom of God, and the power of God." So unfathomable are the counsels of Divine Wisdom contained *in it*, that all the angels of heaven are searching into it, with a thirst that is insatiable: and such is its efficacy, that nothing can withstand its influence. By this then, you, my Brethren, may judge, whether your be Christians in deed and in truth, or whether ye be such in name only. A nominal Christian is contented with *approving of* the way of salvation by a crucified Redeemer: the true Christian *loves* it, *delights in* it, *glories in* it, and *shudders at the thought of glorying in any thing else*. Say, Brethren, are such *your* views, and such *your* feelings? Do you see how base and unworthy it would be to glory in any thing else? Does your spirit rise with indignation at the thought of so requiting your adorable Redeemer? Be assured, it will be thus with you, if your hearts are truly enlightened, and if you have "learned of the Father as the truth is in Jesus."]

2. How heavenly his life!

[He is *in* the world; but "he is not *of it*: he has overcome the world; and this is the victory by which he has overcome it; even his faith." "His treasure is in heaven;" and "his conversation is there also." Behold him, and you will see "a man of God;" a man "born from above;" a man "filled with the Holy Ghost;" a man "walking as Christ himself walked." In Christ you see the figure which is used in our text completely illustrated. "He had not even where to lay his head;" yet, "when the people would have taken him, to make him a king, he withdrew, and hid himself from them." In the primitive Christians, too, you see the same spirit: for "they were not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world." Aspire *ye* then, Beloved, after this high and holy attainment. Walk ye in a holy indifference to the world: shew yourselves superior to all the things of time and sense. "Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth." Let all your joys flow from the contemplation



temptation of his cross. Thus shall you "dwell in God, and God in you:" you shall be "one with God, and God with you;" and the very instant that the ties between the world and you shall be finally dissolved by death, you shall soar as on eagles' wings, to take possession of the crowns and kingdoms that await you in a better world.]

END OF VOL. IX.

LONDON:
Printed by R. Watts, Crown Court, Temple Bar.

00110969

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 21 October, 2015